Create a Successful Website

THE CHARTER SCHOOL USER EXPERIENCE GUIDE

In partnership with Shaina Rozen and Niki Blaker

Grow Schools

Getting you the money, resources, and know-how to create thriving schools.

When it comes to creating or updating your school's website, you might feel overwhelmed or unsure where to start. This guide offers practical tips for designing a site that prioritizes your users–the people who will use your site–and makes their experience as easy and intuitive as possible. You'll find 10 best practices you can use for attracting and engaging your target audience, along with examples of other effective school websites and plans you can use for ongoing site improvement.

The guidance here is provided in collaboration with:

NIKI BLAKER

Design Strategist and Owner, Five Sigma Studio

Niki Blaker is a design strategist and founder of Five Sigma Studio – a design firm focused on bringing brand strategy, user experience, design, and content together. Her work is guided by an emphasis on cross-discipline collaboration and in-depth research that makes meaningful brand strategy and design experiences possible.

SHAINA ROZEN

Content Strategist and Owner, Sidetone

When businesses struggle to stand out from the competition and explain what they do in words their customers understand, Shaina Rozen is there to help. As a content strategist and writer, she collaborates with companies to translate complex information into clear communication, show their brand's unique value, and inspire their audience to act.

Helping you get where you're going.

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Table of Contents

Designing Effective User Experiences—Together

Designing Effective User Experiences – Together

What do Insight PA Cyber Charter School in Pennsylvania, Harmony Public Schools in Texas, and Liberty Common Schools in Colorado have in common?

Yes, they're all charter schools. But what's immediately noticeable when visiting all three of their websites is the impressive user experience.

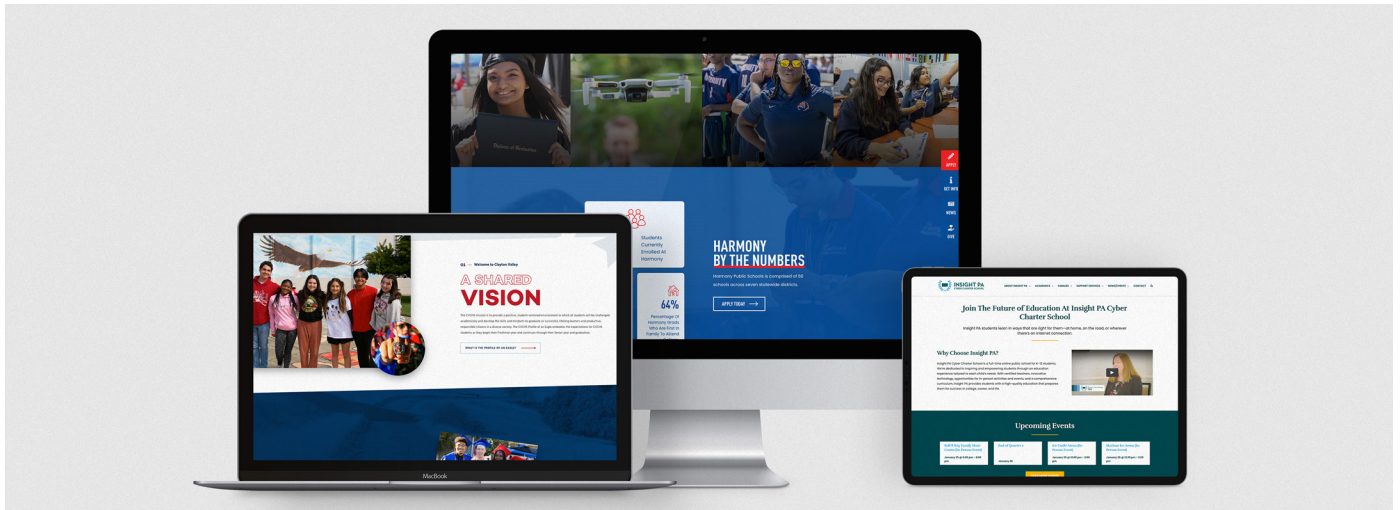Each website features compelling design, authentic and interactive content (text, videos, etc.), simple menus (also called "navigation"), and clear next steps (also called "calls to action") – all contributing to a memorable, effective user experience.

While many companies and brands focus on how their website *looks*, those with the most successful websites focus on how they *work* and make people *feel* too.

Design is usually thought of as an artistic, creative discipline, but UX design is driven by psychology and problem-solving. Subsequently, there are proven ingredients for UX success – and that's what we will explore together in this guide.

Your website is often someone's first impression of your school. It's not just a piece of visual design–it's a key resource for driving enrollment, engaging your school community, and supporting student success. By investing in creating an easy-to-use, engaging website, your school can draw students, parents, staff, and supporters who resonate with your school's mission.
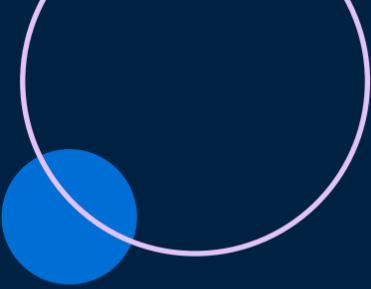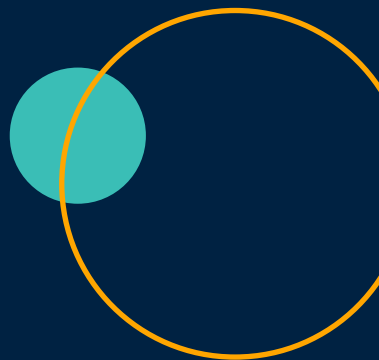
Understand the Needs, Motivations, and Experiences of Your Users

Understand the Needs, Motivations, and Experiences of Your Users

No matter how well you know the people your school serves, it can be difficult not to look at your school website except through the lens of your own background, culture, and lived experiences.

Because your school's website is built for others—who may or may not share your background or think and behave like you do—it's vital to deeply understand your users and bring their needs to the center of every decision. Your website's success depends on your users' success.

Designing the best experiences for your users requires first understanding who they are and what their current experience is like.

As you plan, start by asking:

- What types of people will be using your site? (Keep in mind you likely have more than one audience: prospective students and parents, current students and parents, prospective staff, faculty, alumni, etc.)

- What is each type of user trying to learn or do on your website?

- What might they be feeling and thinking when they are on your website?

- What is motivating their decisions and influencing their actions?

There are several UX research and discovery strategies that can help your team get to know your users on a deeper level, confirm assumptions, and uncover new findings.

TERMS DEFINED

User

Any person who interacts with your website, app, or digital product.

For charter schools, a user may be a current or potential student, their parents, current or potential staff members, alumni, the local press, and anyone else who is looking for more information about your institution.

ANALYTICS

Analytics tools that track your current site, such as Google Analytics, heatmaps, search data, and usage logs, are great sources of information on how people are using your current website. This data helps reveal what users are most interested in, how they navigate and interact with your site, and opportunities for improvement (see **page 11** for tool suggestions).

INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

Analytics tools reveal *how* users behave, but they don't explain the underlying reasons *why*. Interviewing current or potential users, or those who regularly interact with users (such as Admissions or Administrative staff), is the best way to get unbiased, detailed feedback about their intentions, perceptions, motivations, constraints, and other important context.

If it's not possible to have direct conversations with users, surveys are another useful way to gather outside perspectives. Surveys can help gather information from *more people in less time*. While interviews take more time and effort, they often produce *more in-depth, actionable feedback*.

EMPATHY MAPPING

Empathy maps are a simple, visual method for analyzing the data you collect about each type of user. They also serve as an alternative tool when you have limited or no access to analytics, interviews, or survey data. By visualizing what your users are *seeing, thinking, doing*, and *feeling* as they interact with your website, you can better meet their needs.

While user personas are another common UX design and marketing tool, we recommend using empathy maps because they dig deeper than demographics and provide more useful information about behaviors, attitudes, and motivations.

SEEING

What are parents and students doing?
What are parents and students looking at?
What are parents' and students' peers looking for?

THINKING

What matters to parents and students?
What occupies parents' and students' minds?
What are parents' and students' aspirations?

DOING

What are parents and students outspoken about?
What are parents and students behavior like?
How do parents and students want to be percieved?

FEELING

What are parents' and students' fears?
What are parents' and students' anxieties?
What are parents' and students' frustrations?

Trying to be everything to everyone results in being nothing to no one. The more specific you can be in defining your audiences, the more your design and messaging will resonate with those people.

Focus on no more than 3-4 types of users on your website (e.g., students, parents, staff, community supporters), and create an empathy map for each user type. Or, create separate sections or websites that are tailored to each audience, like **New York University** does.

The NYU website makes it easy for each type of user (students, faculty, alumni, employees, and the community), to visit specific sections that are tailored to their needs.
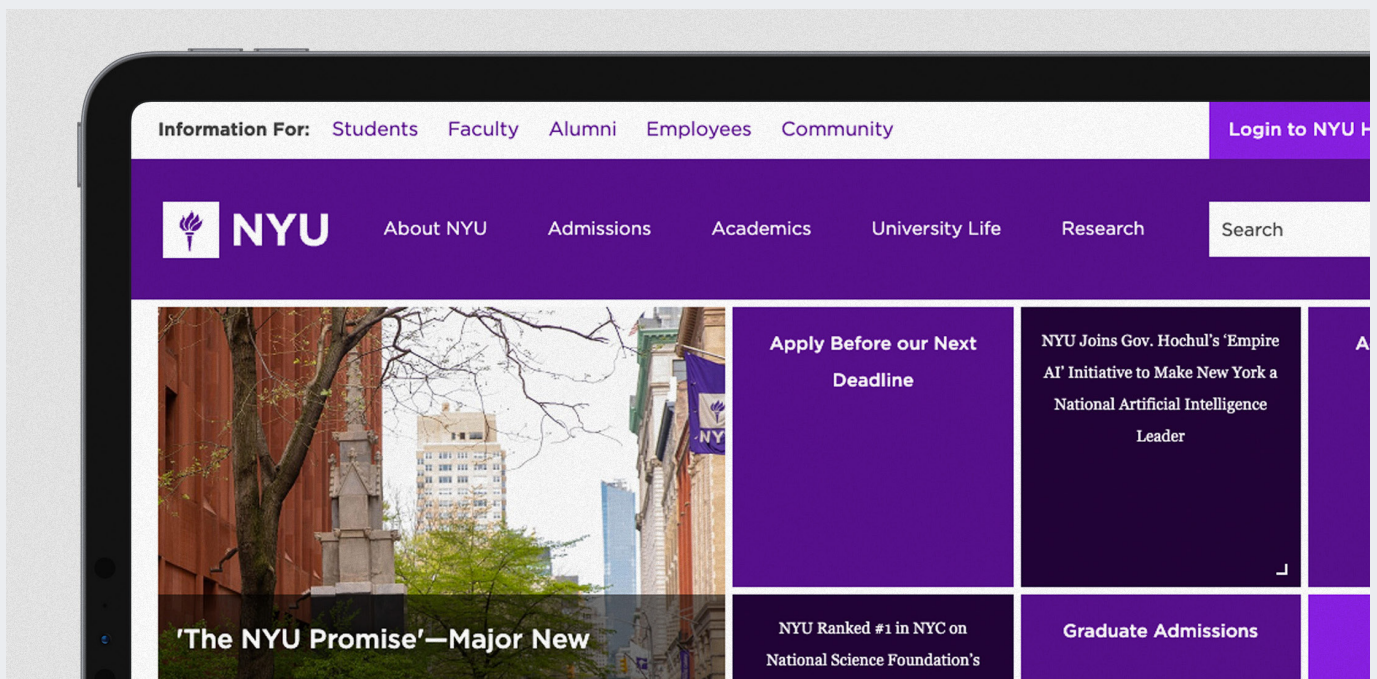
The NYU website makes it easy for each type of user (students, faculty, alumni, employees, and the community), to visit specific sections that are tailored to their needs.

More Resources

For more tips on how to determine your audiences and develop messaging that connects with them, download the **Charter School Digital Marketing Guide.**

Best Practice #2

Set Clear, Measurable Website Goals

Set Clear, Measurable Website Goals

How can you know if your school's website is successful? Measure it!

Outlining goals from the beginning helps stakeholders stay aligned around the desired outcomes, benchmark a baseline to measure progress, inform each step of the creation process, guide usability testing, and increase ROI.

However, it can be tricky to select the right website metrics to track. Here are a few key tips for setting goals and evaluating effectiveness.

USE THE SMART FRAMEWORK

SMART goals are **specific**, **measurable**, **achievable**, **relevant**, and **time-bound**. For example, "Increase enrollment" is too broad. A better, SMART goal would be "Increase the number of applications submitted through the website by 10% in the next 12 months."

INSTALL ANALYTICS TOOLS ON YOUR WEBSITE TO TRACK THE GOALS YOU SET

- Install Google Analytics on your website to track user behavior
- Create conversion tracking tags with **Google Tag Manager**
- Use heatmap tools like **Glassbox, FullStory,** or **HotJar**
- Monitor **Google Search Console** to measure SEO performance and spot technical issues

COMBINE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA FOR ACCURATE, ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Once you install analytics, you'll have plenty of data to measure. Popular website metrics to track are number of users (or people visiting your site) and engagement time (how much time users spend on a page or site).

However, a word of caution: these metrics can be misleading. A high number of users seems like a good thing, but there may be a lot of "spam" or "bot" traffic (which are not real users) driving those numbers up. Likewise, high engagement time may seem like a good thing (and often is), but these figures might be high because people are spending a lot of time looking for what they need, which is a problem.

To ensure you're getting the full story, combine **quantitative metrics with qualitative feedback** (such as combining analytics data with user interviews). By digging deeper into your analytics tools and complementing that data with real user feedback, you can better understand why the numbers are the way they are, and improve them to make progress toward your goals.

Balance Statistics with Storytelling
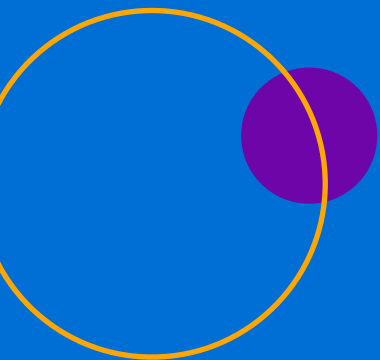
Balance Statistics with Storytelling

School websites often share impressive statistics and messages about the school's achievements, such as awards won, number of students, graduation rates, and academic scores.

While these data points help build credibility, they don't necessarily connect with people on a deeper level. That happens through storytelling.

Humans are inherently emotional. Even the most logical decision-makers still base choices on subconscious emotions: happiness, comfort, trust, and confidence. It's crucial to appeal to users' *hearts* in addition to their *heads*.

Take it from author and speaker Simon Sinek in his book, ***Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action:***

"Put bluntly, the struggle that so many companies have to differentiate or communicate their true value to the outside world is not a business problem, it's a biology problem.

And just like a person struggling to put her emotions into words, we rely on metaphors, imagery and analogies in an attempt to communicate how we feel. Absent the proper language to share our deep emotions, our purpose, cause or belief, we tell stories. We use symbols. We create tangible things for those who believe what we believe to point to and say, 'That's why I'm inspired.'

If done properly, that's what marketing, branding and products and services become: a way for organizations to communicate to the outside world. Communicate clearly, and you shall be understood."
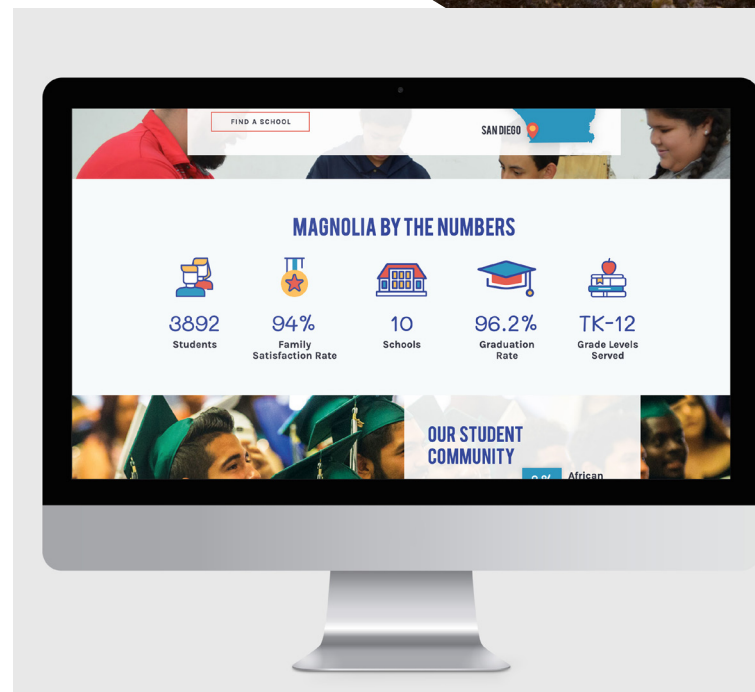
Statistics for Magnolia Public Schools

Some of the best methods for inspiring through storytelling include:

ANECDOTES

Short stories from real people are powerful for connecting and persuading. For instance, in addition to sharing graduation statistics, you could share a video or written story from a student and their parents about their experience at your school. Adding emotion to these anecdotes makes them even more powerful, such as asking about the family's happiest or proudest moment during their time at your school.

Stories can also provide a more engaging way to convey your school's culture and differentiators. See how **Kavod** and **Insight PA**–both of whom partnered with Grow Schools for enrollment support–use storytelling to convey a school's values and unique approach.

USER STORIES

A user story is an informal, natural-language description of the features of a website or digital product, written from the user's perspective. A common user story format is: *"As a <role>, I want to <activity>, so I can <outcome>."*

Software engineers often rely on user stories to prioritize what to create and how. These stories can also help your team surface opportunities to weave storytelling and emotion into a website, as well as improve how the site works.

With this user story in mind, your team might add text, graphics, and/or videos to your home page or about page to make it crystal clear what sets your charter school apart from others. Success stories and **case studies** can also help provide proof and build trust through storytelling.

With this user story in mind, your team might add information about the enrollment and review process above the application. Or, you could create a new page on your website that not only shares an overview of the enrollment process and frequently ask questions, **like the Insight PA Cyber Charter School website,** but also includes helpful information walking them through the steps to enroll.
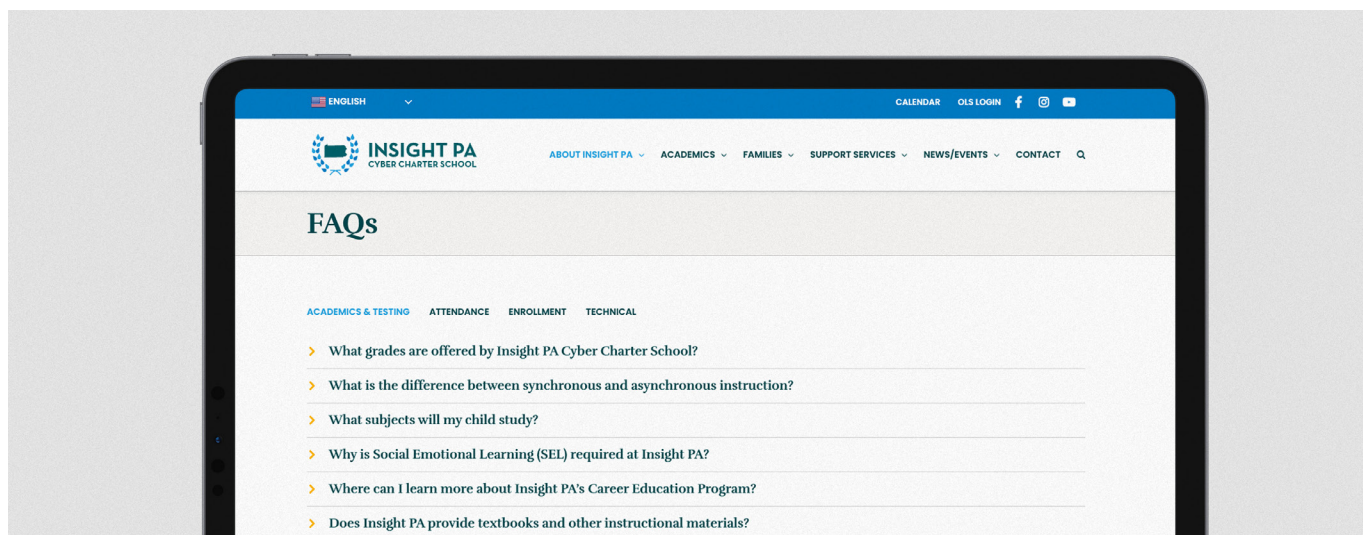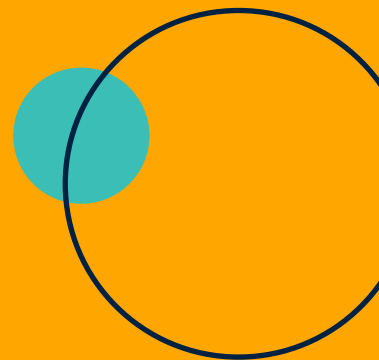

More Resources

For more on storytelling watch our webinar, **How to Grow Your School with Enrollment Marketing.**

Organize Information to Help Users Find What They Need and Take Action Quickly

Organize Information to Help Users Find What They Need and Take Action Quickly

People don't visit school websites because they want to look at something beautiful. They visit to *get something done*: find information, answer a question, or complete a task.

To help accomplish that goal, a website must be organized in a way that makes sense to users and enables them to do what they need to do, as quickly and easily as possible. This is where information architecture (IA) comes in.

IA is the practice of deciding how to organize and maintain your content, what the relationships are between each piece of content (such as where each button or link goes to), and how content is displayed on your website's navigation. Your IA should balance your **users' needs** and your **school's goals**.

TERMS DEFINED

Information Architecture

The practice of deciding how to organize and maintain your content, what the relationships are between each piece of content, and how content is visibly displayed on your website's navigation.

For example, let's say your team's main goal when redesigning your website is to boost enrollment. If you were organizing the home page based solely on school goals, you might say, "Enroll now!" at the very top of the page.

However, users might feel turned off or confused if that's the first thing they see. They want to learn more about your school and whether it's the right fit for them before deciding whether to enroll. To prioritize their needs while also considering your school's goals, you could share a video on the home page about the student experience, then add a button to enroll before the deadline as a motivating call to action.

Investing time and effort into information architecture helps create clear, easy, and effective experiences for your users, which ultimately helps your school reach its business goals. Our go-to IA exercises are core modeling and mobile-first prioritization.

CORE MODELING

Core modeling is a tool that helps every stakeholder in the website creation process collaboratively determine how to organize a page or marketing piece. Leaders, writers, and marketers can use core models to decide what information to talk about, and the order of priority of that information. Designers and developers use them to identify which sections are needed on each page, the order of priority, and what to emphasize.

Core page: _Enrollment Registration Information_

School Goals:
Providing information on how to enroll for the next year
Help parents start the enrollment proces

User Tasks:
Enrollment Overview
Enrollment FAQ
Important dates and directions
Registration form

Inward paths

Core content

Forward paths

Core modeling works best when multiple stakeholders get together to discuss the school's goals, key tasks users will want to accomplish on each page, how people will likely enter and exit the site (inward and outward paths), and the core information and functionality that will help them do so.

More resources

To learn more about core modeling, **visit this guide from A List Apart.**

Stakeholder

A person with an interest or concern in a project or organization.

In the case of a website, stakeholders could include the team that is directly working on the site, as well as other people throughout the organization who impact or are impacted by the site, such as leaders who provide input on goals and vision, admissions who provide enrollment information, administrators who provide common school questions and concerns, or finance who provides budget oversight.

MOBILE-FIRST PRIORITIZATION

Whether you've already done core modeling and have a ton of potential information to share, or you're starting from scratch and trying to figure out how to organize everything, it's eye-opening to consider how someone will experience your website on a mobile device or smaller screen.

Ask yourself and your team:

- What information is most important for our users to see?
- Then, what's next important?
- If someone is visiting our website on their phone or a tablet, how should the site be designed to help users find and do what they need, while pulling them toward the actions that support our bottom line?

Thinking about the small-screen experience first helps determine the most appropriate and effective way to organize information on every device. If it makes the most sense for someone using a smartphone or tablet, it will likely make the most sense on larger screen sizes as well.
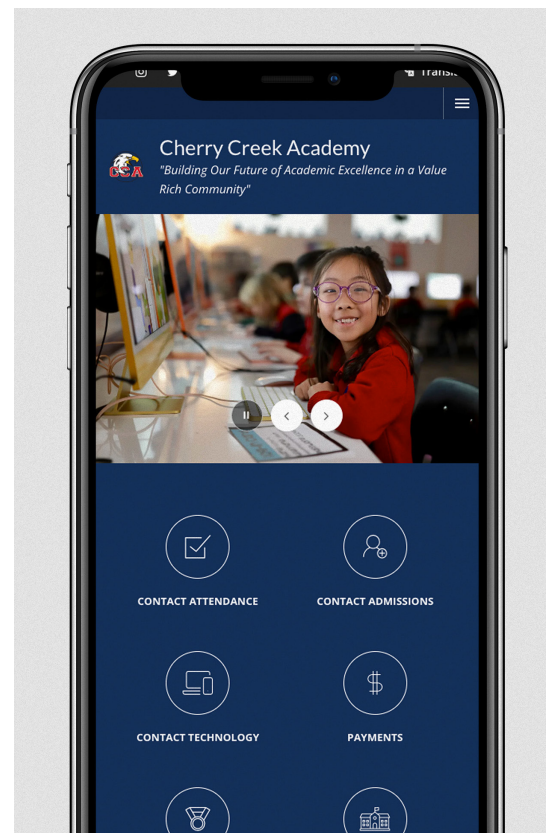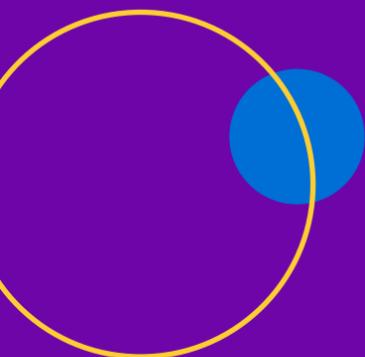

Even when Cherry Creek Academy's website shrinks down for a small screen, it makes important information and actions easy to find.
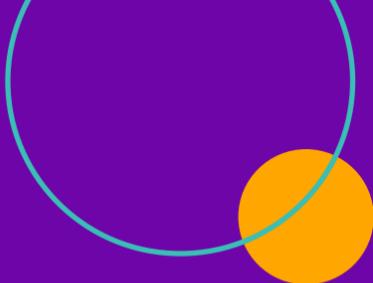
Best Practice #5

Establish an Authentic, Consistent Voice and Tone

Establish an Authentic, Consistent Voice and Tone

Voice (your brand's personality) and tone (how you apply that personality based on the user's mood or context) are often overlooked, but they're a vital element of your website and marketing.

Ask yourself and your team:

- How are you going to communicate your school's main features, benefits, and talking points to your audience?

- How do you want people to feel when visiting your website and school campus?

- Is our voice formal or casual? Bold or traditional? Serious or lighthearted?

These details make a big difference in creating an easy-to-understand and memorable experience, building trust, and differentiating your charter school from peers and competitors.

TERMS DEFINED

Touchpoint

A point of contact or interaction, especially between a business and its customers or consumers.

Consider Southwest Airlines for inspiration. Most airlines take the traditional, corporate approach to their communications. If you took away the logo and colors, you may not even be able to tell the difference between them. On the other hand, Southwest is known for their friendly, playful voice, which they consistently apply to every touchpoint, from their app to bags of pretzels.

Image credit: lippincott.com

Like a real person, the Southwest brand also adapts the tone for each situation. For instance, they recognize there are times when customers may be feeling stressed, confused, rushed, or frustrated, such as when their baggage is lost. In that case, they use a tone that's serious and empathetic, without losing their usual friendliness or straightforward style.

Credit: Southwest.com

As Southwest demonstrates, a brand's voice and word choice contributes just as much to the user experience as their colors, fonts, images, and visual design. Delivering an authentic, consistent experience online and in person has helped Southwest remain one of the biggest U.S. airlines for decades, despite having one of the smallest teams.

Your school can do the same. Try this exercises to define or refine your voice and tone.

Card Sort for Voice

Using the list of adjectives below or by using a card deck like ones from the board game **Apples to Apples**, choose the top five words that best describe your school's personality and overall experience.

☐ Active	☐ Chic	☐ Engaging	☐ Light-hearted	☐ Serene
☐ Adventurous	☐ Classic	☐ Enjoyable	☐ Lively	☐ Serious
☐ Affectionate	☐ Comfortable	☐ Enlightened	☐ Methodical	☐ Smart
☐ Ageless	☐ Confident	☐ Exuberant	☐ Modern	☐ Sophisticated
☐ Ambitious	☐ Conservative	☐ Funny	☐ Motivating	☐ Sparkling
☐ Amusing	☐ Cosmopolitan	☐ Gracious	☐ Natural	☐ Spiritual
☐ Aspiring	☐ Courageous	☐ Happy	☐ Noble	☐ Studious
☐ Assertive	☐ Daring	☐ Heartwarming	☐ Old-fashioned	☐ Sweet
☐ Authoritative	☐ Deliberate	☐ Helpful	☐ Polished	☐ Systematic
☐ Balanced	☐ Delightful	☐ Honorable	☐ Refined	☐ Tough
☐ Benevolent	☐ Direct	☐ Humble	☐ Reflective	☐ Unconventional
☐ Bold	☐ Distinctive	☐ Humorous	☐ Relaxed	☐ Valiant
☐ Bright	☐ Driven	☐ Informal	☐ Reputable	☐ Warm
☐ Captivating	☐ Edgy	☐ Innovative	☐ Revolutionary	☐ Whimsical
☐ Caring	☐ Empowering	☐ Intelligent	☐ Rugged	☐ Wordly
☐ Casual	☐ Enchanting	☐ Intuitive	☐ Sarcastic	☐ Youthful
☐ Charming	☐ Energetic	☐ Kind	☐ Savvy	☐ Zestful

CONSIDER THE CONTEXT TO ADJUST YOUR TONE

A brand's voice always stays the same, but the tone changes based on several variables: the touchpoint, where and how the information is being presented, what the user is thinking and feeling in that moment, etc. For example, your tone may be a bit more casual and playful when talking about sports programs at your school, but more serious when talking about the enrollment process.
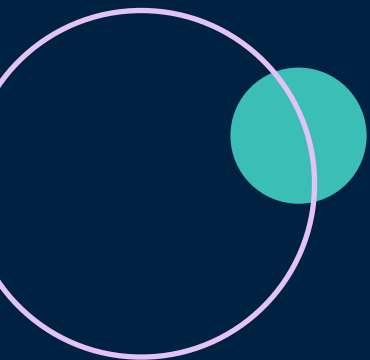
Work with your team to define how the tone of your content should change based on these variables. See **Buckeye Community School's brand guidelines** for inspiration.

Create a Design System to Develop a Consistent Experience

Create a Design System to Develop a Consistent Experience

One of the main goals behind all charter school websites is to help drive enrollment and build long-lasting connections between a school and its supporters. One way to accomplish this goal is by creating a design system that helps develop a consistent, on-brand experience at every touchpoint.

Design systems have traditionally been defined as a central library of patterns, components, guidelines, and tools. They also help document the more abstract – but equally important – elements, such as a charter school's brand, such as their mission, values, and voice.

With a clear, centralized design system, your team can:

- Create a shared vision of the school brand for every team member, stakeholder, and collaborator
- Provide a single source of truth for all marketing and design elements
- Make website stakeholders' jobs easier so they can focus on more complex problems
- Improve accessibility for both the internal team and external users
- Optimize the user experience

TERMS DEFINED

Design System

A complete set of standards intended to support design at scale, using reusable components and patterns.

VALUES AS MODELS

Before creating a design system, it's crucial to align the charter school team and any website stakeholders around a shared set of goals and values. Values serve as ideals that guide everything from the school's overall vision, to design principles, to tactical execution.

For example, when redesigning the design system for Buckeye Community School, Grow Schools created a logo, color palette, typography, photography style, and design elements that reflect Buckeye's mission and values.
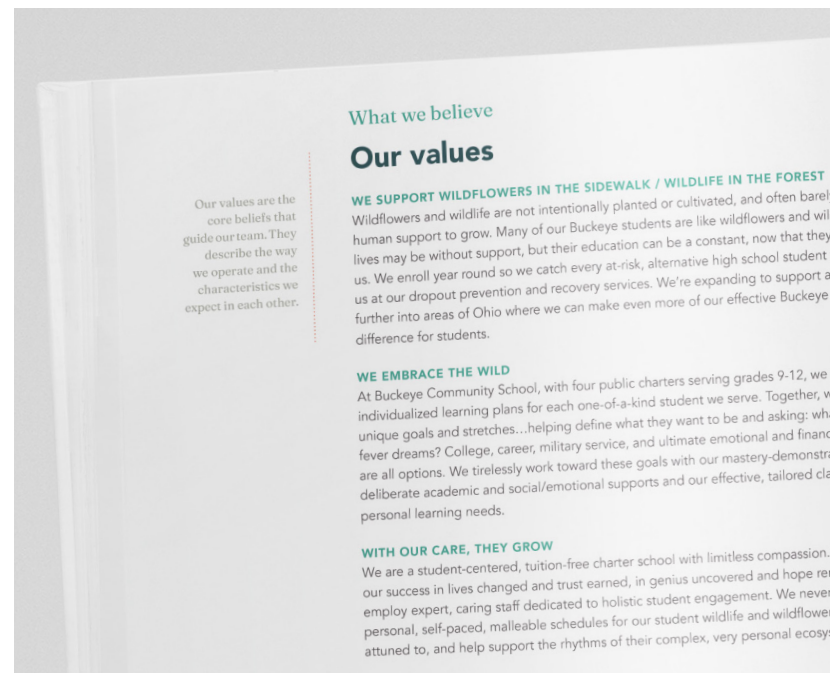
Buckeye Community School's values
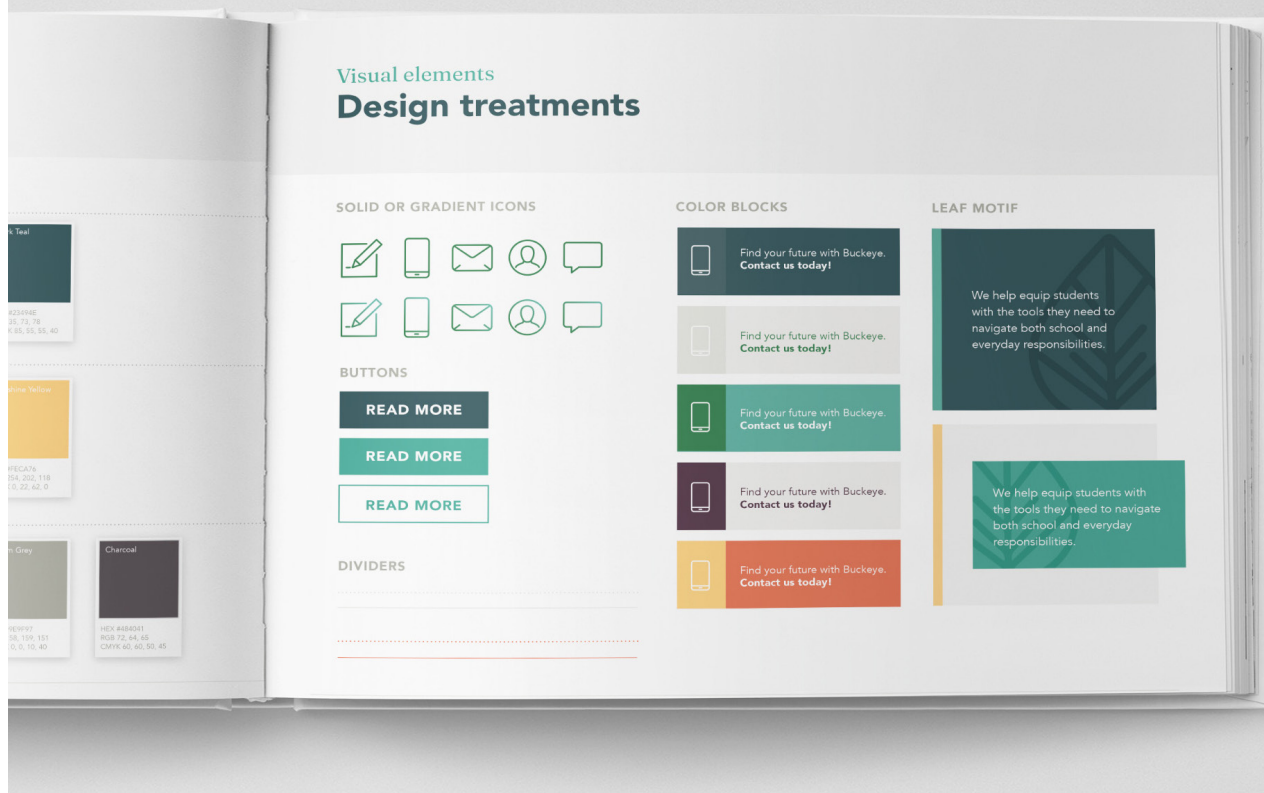
Buckeye Community School's design system, which was informed by their mission, values, and voice

BRAND GUIDELINES

Brand guidelines are a set of rules showing how to handle a brand's visual design elements, such as logo placement, typography, and colors. Verbal elements, such as voice and tone, are often included to address how a brand sounds in addition to how it looks.

As websites and digital products have evolved, so has the need for guidelines that include more robust elements of a website, such as grids, colors, buttons, forms, and fields – all still rooted in the brand's vision, values, and culture.

COMPONENT LIBRARIES

Component libraries are thorough collections of pre-determined, reusable elements (buttons, links, icons, etc.) that designers and developers can use when creating a website. They are most useful for large and/or growing schools because they help keep the site consistent and cohesive as it expands.

More Resources

For more information and examples of design systems, visit **Design Systems 101 by NN Group.**
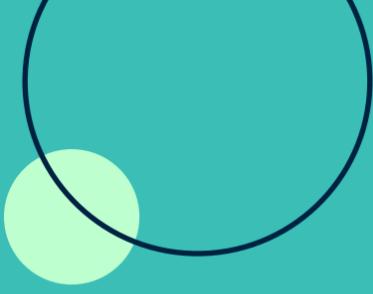
Consider How to Create More Inclusive Experiences
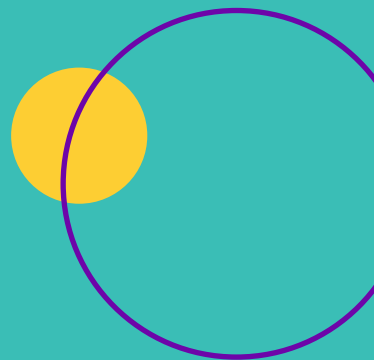
Consider How to Create More Inclusive Experiences

As charter schools strive to attract more diverse students, a school's website is a prime opportunity to set the tone and stand apart.

School websites – and all websites – should consider all types of users, not just the majority. They must be accessible (able to be used by people of all abilities) and inclusive (not exclusionary in their form or content).

To make your site more accessible, think about how to:

- Make text large and clear enough to read
- Use colors that are easy on the eyes
- Adding alt text to meaningful images
- Offer more than one way to experience your website, such as including videos and captions for greater accessibility.
- Provide easy ways to adjust preferences, such as changing the language in which the text is displayed
- Make it simple to suggest new ideas and technologies, such as including a way to contact your school via the menu or at the bottom of your site

> **TERMS DEFINED**
>
> ## Alt Text
> Alternative text, commonly referred to as alt text, is a textual description of an image appearing within a web page. This text is part of the page's HTML code, included as an alt attribute, which is a special tag that tells the browser what to display if the image cannot be loaded.
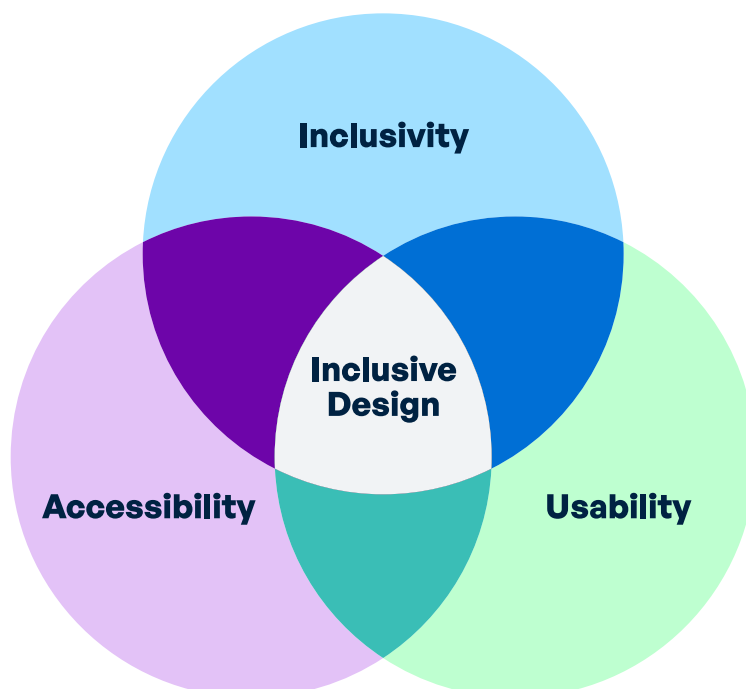
Here are some best practices for creating an inclusive and welcome website:

- Use informal language where possible and avoid industry or technical jargon
- Use action-oriented language on links and buttons.
    - For example, use verbs that tell users what you would like them to do like "Request More Information" is more effective than "Click Here", which may be vague and confusing
- Provide interactive and positive reinforcement.
    - For example, when a user has completed an application, follow up with an acknowledgement that the information has been received and reassure them of follow-up communication

AUTOMATED TOOLS AND MANUAL TESTING FOR TESTING

How can you tell if your website design is inclusive? There are several free and helpful accessibility tools, that are able to check a variety of issues on your website, including:

- **WAVE Accessibility Evaluation Tool**
- **Siteimprove Accessibility Checker Chrome extension**
- **axe DevTools**

While automated tools are a huge help in accessibility testing, they can't catch every error, since they can't understand context or evaluate content quality. Some manual testing tactics can include:

- **Content Review** – Read through your content with accessibility best practices in mind
- **Keyboard Testing** – Check that all interactive elements can be operated with a keyboard
- **Screen Reader Review** – Test with a screen reader to uncover issues with reading order and interactive elements

By incorporating inclusive considerations while designing your school's website, your school can help create an atmosphere where parents, students, teachers, and staff can all feel the same sense of inclusion.
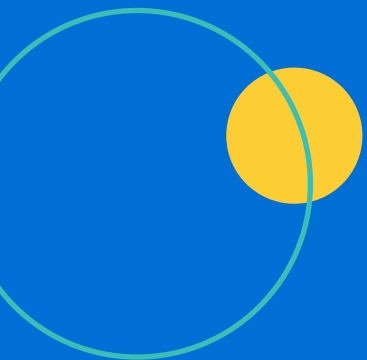
More Resources

For an inspirational example of how AirBnB implemented illustration guidelines for inclusivity, **check out this article.**

Test Your Website with Real People

Test Your Website with Real People

Watching how real people use your website is the best way to improve the user experience. This is why usability testing is invaluable.

While it may seem like internal stakeholders could test the usability of your website, they are often too familiar with your school and/or the site, impairing their ability to share objective feedback. Asking real users to help with testing will more accurately demonstrate if the site meets their needs and supports business goals, while surfacing opportunities for improvement.

TERMS DEFINED

Usability Testing

Evaluating a product or service by testing it with real or representative users.

Usability testing is scalable. If you have limited time or resources, testing can be done quickly, inexpensively, and still uncover insightful findings. In addition to helping improve the user experience, usability testing makes it easier to gain buy-in, validate hypotheses, and inform the overall direction of the website.

There are two main approaches to testing. Choosing the right method depends on your school's primary goal. In most cases, a combination of both methods is most effective.

Some key differences between qualitative and quantitative testing:

	QUALITATIVE TESTING	QUANTITATIVE TESTING
It helps you understand:	why	how many and how much
You can use it to:	understand users' thoughts or experiences	test or confirm a hypothesis
Results are expressed through:	words and experiences	numbers, graphs, and tables
You can get results with:	even a few participants	a larger number of participants for more accurate results

Qualitative usability testing

Ideal for testing early website concepts to improve them before launch

Qualitative usability testing involves watching how people use website concepts to identify what works best and where they run into difficulty. Qualitative tests can include:

- Interviews
- Open-ended questionnaires
- Quizzes
- Focus groups
- Direct observation

Sample qualitative research approach

Conduct in-depth interviews with five students or parents by asking them open-ended questions, such as:

- Describe your last visit to our website.
- What was the experience like to find what you were looking for?
- What information did you find most helpful on our website?
- Was there any information you were looking for that you couldn't find, or tasks you were trying to complete but couldn't?

Based on the answers, you can ask follow-up questions for clarification and implement changes from there.

Quantitative usability testing

Ideal for discovering problems in already-launched websites or for comparing multiple designs and approaches

Quantitative usability testing focuses more on numerical data, such as how many users successfully found and filled out the contact form on your website. Quantitative tests can include:

- A/B testing, which tests two concepts to see which one performs better
- Using heatmap tools like Glassbox, FullStory, or HotJar
- Creating conversion tracking tags with Google Tag Manager
- Questionnaires with close-ended or multiple-choice questions, like "Were you satisfied with your experience today? (Yes or No)"

Sample quantitative research approach

Setting up a Google Tag Manager code to track:

- How many users go to your Enrollment page
- How many start filling out the enrollment form but don't finish
- How many successfully complete the enrollment form

If you observe that a high number of users don't finish the enrollment form, that may indicate the form is too long or complicated. Simplifying the form would likely increase the completion rate.

Best Practice #9

Go Beyond the Digital Experience

Go Beyond the Digital Experience

Typically, "user experience" refers to online interactions with your school's website, app, and other digital products. However, every touchpoint – both online and offline – drives their decisions and their engagement with your school.

Since every interaction someone has with your school makes an impression, it's vital for all teams to share information and work together across silos. For example, the team working on your website should collaborate with the leadership team to understand the school's big-picture goals, with staff who frequently interact with students and families to hear about frequently asked questions, and with your marketing team or partners to get more familiar with the school's branding and messaging. All of this information can inform the way the website is organized, designed, and written for maximum success.

Here are several ways to create even better experiences for your audience across all touchpoints:

1 **Ensure someone knowledgeable is always available** to answer the phone and/or return voice messages and emails promptly.

2 **Consider the user's journey when interacting with your school from start to finish.**

For example, first they hear about your school from a friend or see an ad about it. Then, they visit the website. Then, they watch a video or download more information, etc. Understanding the person's feelings and actions at each touchpoint helps spot opportunities for improvement and create a more cohesive experience.

3 **Meet with admissions and administrative staff to ask them the most common questions and complaints they hear from people.**

Then, brainstorm how you can resolve those questions and complaints *before* they contact your school.

4 **When making decisions for the website, think about how that decision will impact the offline or in-person experience – and vice versa.**

5 **When someone shares feedback about your school, brainstorm how that input could impact the website's design or information.**

Vice versa, when someone shares feedback on the website, think about how that input could impact the offline experience.

6 **Inform and adjust your school's business goals when you see trends in user experience issues, and explore better ways to better solve those problems.**
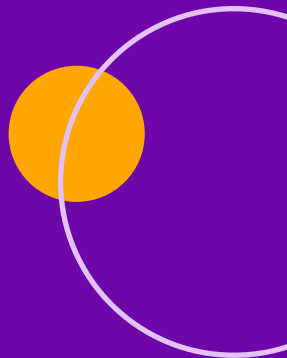
For instance, if you're noticing a lot of Spanish speakers are interested in your school, you could offer Spanish translation on the website and consider Spanish-speaking programming.

Bridge the Gap Between the Digital and Physical World with Event Marketing

Bridge the Gap Between the Digital and Physical World with Event Marketing

People don't experience your website and digital marketing separately from their physical interactions (on the phone, in person, etc.). It's all part of the same brand in their mind. Consequently, delivering successful experiences requires bringing them all together.

For example, events can be a great opportunity for the community and your potential students and families to understand your charter school and really picture themselves as part of your community. Events are definitely a "conversion" tactic – one of the last steps a student or family will take before "converting," or deciding whether to attend your school.

Events are by far the most impactful marketing you can do, especially when it comes to enrollment.

Events include:

- Frequent open houses, tours, and meet-and-greets with teachers at scheduled dates and times
- Inviting prospective families to plays, workshops, sports events, and concerts
- Offering video conference options with tools like Zoom to reach even more people and provide accessible options to those who can't attend in person
- Holding enrollment events at your school or community spaces to capture the attention of parents who are planning ahead and exploring their options
- Providing community activities even in summer months for prospective parents and students

Keep in mind: This is not a "If you build it, they will come" situation. Promotion is essential to drive attendance. Combining physical events with digital marketing makes them even more effective.

Attract people to your events by sending an announcement to your email list, featuring the event on your website, posting on social media, and advertising in the community. Also, make sure your teachers and front office staff are aware of event details in case people contact them for more information.

More Resources

For more guidance on digital and physical marketing for charter schools, download the **Charter School Digital Marketing Guide.**

Worksheet

Take the Next Step

Take the Next Step

Creating a new website is a big undertaking. Approaching it one step at a time makes it easier for everyone. Start the process by defining your audiences, goals, and stakeholders.

AUDIENCES
What types of people will be using your site? Keep in mind you likely have more than one audience: prospective students and parents, current students and parents, prospective staff, faculty, alumni, etc.

GOALS
What will our website help your users learn and do? What will it help your school accomplish?

Example Audience 1
Prospective Families

Our website should help prospective families to

_____ , _____ ,

and _____ .

Example Audience 2
Current Families

Our website should help current families to

_____ , _____ ,

and _____ .

Example Audience 3
Teachers and Staff

Our website should help teachers and staff to

_____ , _____ ,

and _____ .

STAKEHOLDERS

Who should be involved in the website creation process?

EXPERT TIP

When there are "too many cooks in the kitchen," website projects can stall or run off course. The experts at **Idea Farm** offer this tip to help - only the people who **MATTER** should be invited to participate:

Make decisions about the website

Assess decisions about the website

Track decisions about the website

Talk about decisions about the website

Execute decisions about the website

Resource decisions about the website

Stakeholders

Who has a vested interest in the success of this website, and why?

_____

_____

Who has been involved in website projects in the past, and why were they asked to be involved?

_____

_____

Who might have a unique perspective on how we could achieve our goals?

_____

_____

Who might oppose this project or decline to participate, and why?

_____

_____

What will each person's role be during the project?

_____
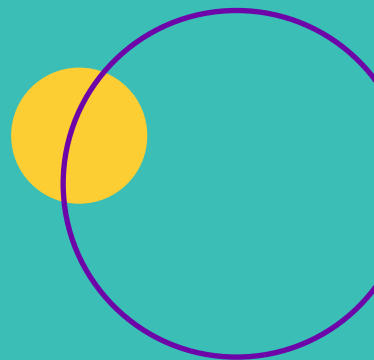
_____

Why do we want them to be involved, and what value will hey provide?

_____

_____

Let's Design Your School's Website— Together

Let's Design Your School's Website—Together

With a Grow Schools enrollment marketing partnership, you'll gain an entire team of marketing professionals who will give you customized support based on your school's needs and goals. Depending on your school's needs, a partnership may include:

CREATE OR STRENGTHEN YOUR BRAND

- Brand Guides
- Colors
- Logos
- Tag lines
- School mission
- Story arcs
- Student and staff highlights

BUILD A CAMPAIGN

- Online marketing
- Social media posts
- Blog posts
- Advertising
- Website improvements
- Email marketing
- Improving search

RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

- Social media strategy
- Event planning support
- Advertising
- Website

OFFLINE MARKETING

- Flyers
- Brochures
- Signage
- Press releases
- Swag

Working with Your Budget

An enrollment marketing partnership can save you time and money. You can choose a payment option to fit any vision or budget: pay-per-performance, blended, and fixed fee.

All plans provide you the same holistic partnership.

Contact us to begin your partnership ➡

You can get the money, resources, and know-how to create a thriving school.

WE CAN HELP WITH:

- Money to run your school
- Money to buy your school
- Kids to fill your school

Let's get started.

LIVE CHAT
growschools.com

EMAIL
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Grow Schools

Helping you get where you're going.