

#Place4UinEDU, a Countywide Approach to Recruitment



Chester County Intermediate Unit Serving over 50,000 students

Entrant:

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Total communication staff: 12

Entry Category:

Marketing/Branding Campaign

SYNOPSIS

The Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU), one of 29 educational service agencies in the state of Pennsylvania, administers instructional, enrichment and administrative programs and services to Chester County's 12 public school districts, including instructional, remedial and enrichment services for regular and special education students. Other IU services support teachers, school administrators and school directors. The diversity of CCIU programs enables IU staff to interact with school district personnel at all levels and to maintain a cohesive educational network throughout Chester County.

In recent years, in line with trends seen nationwide, Chester County school districts and the CCIU have experienced increasing challenges in filling open vacancies, especially among support staff positions. Each individual school district has initiated more visible campaigns to attract new talent, but the question was raised: what more could be done collectively at a county level?

Facilitated by the CCIU communications team, district HR and communication directors across the county came together over a three-month period in the fall of 2022 to establish a proposed multichannel countywide approach to marketing and recruitment that would raise awareness of the employment opportunities available within education and further elevate the efforts of each individual school district and the IU. Approved unanimously by the 12 school district superintendents in December 2022, the campaign, featuring staff from all 12 school districts across six primary job categories, was developed and ultimately launched in mid-February 2023.

A key component of the campaign is the sponsorship provided by seven of the county's core educational staffing partners. Provided with two sponsorship tier options, the staffing partners were able to commit to the level that best suited their budgets while achieving shared reach and exposure through the campaign. Ultimately, the sponsorship funds received were able to cover the full cost of the planned campaign with no out-of-pocket expense to the districts.

While the campaign will continue until at least June 30, 2023, positive engagement has already been measured within the first month of the campaign and planned campaign additions throughout the next few months aim to continue the momentum.

RESEARCH

The Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU) facilitates numerous job-alike networking groups within Chester County, including district HR directors and district communication directors/specialists. The initial inquiry regarding a county-wide approach to recruitment efforts came from one of the district communication directors during a communication job-alike meeting. With the approval of the district representative and support of fellow communication directors, the CCIU took the idea to the HR directors' job-alike group. Ultimately, a small countywide recruitment committee was formed with representatives from both HR and communications.

Through initial discussions with the countywide recruitment committee, three key objectives were identified that would then initiate the development of the recruitment campaign proposal:

- 1. Increase awareness of employment opportunities within the field of education with a specific focus on non-teaching positions.
 - A collaborative approach to teacher recruitment and hiring already exists between the CCIU and the 12 Chester County school districts with the <u>Chester County HR Recruiting Consortium</u>, so the committee desired a focus more on the non-teaching positions. With an unemployment rate in the county of only 2.4%, there was acknowledgement that we are competing against many more employers outside education and that a large number of job seekers may not even recognize what opportunities may exist within schools.
- 2. Position Chester County school districts and the CCIU as highly desirable places of employment. In this post-pandemic time when staffing shortages are being seen across almost every industry, especially in entry-level positions, it is imperative that the benefits of working in education are clearly defined. We are competing against the likes of Amazon who are advertising higher hourly rates and advance payments. We know we cannot always compete on salary, but we know there are additional tangible and intangible benefits that may make a difference to our desired audiences.
- 3. Increase overall pool of applicants, both from within and around Chester County. Chester County is the wealthiest county in Pennsylvania, so while our pay may be higher than neighboring counties, we recognize that it also brings with it a very high cost of living. As such, geographically, we want to ensure we are reaching audiences in our neighboring counties who may be willing to commute. While the campaign focus is on awareness, ultimately, the desire is for awareness to lead to consideration and conversion. The CCIU and all 12 school districts want to see higher levels of quality candidates applying to open positions.

In order to establish a good baseline for the messaging and to determine a direction forward, initial countywide recruitment committee meetings focused on first learning from each other's efforts (mini focus group) and then working through a positioning exercise whereby the group focused in on learned experiences surrounding key audience insights and differentiating benefits. Additionally, the committee reviewed the 2022 awareness campaign initiated by the state of Delaware for jobs in state government.

In the end, the committee established a <u>campaign messaging document</u> that focused on the following key messages:

- Meaningful Work: Work every day knowing that you are making a difference in the lives of our youth and our community, now and into the future.
- **Community Connections:** Establish tighter community connections by playing an active role in your neighborhood schools, the central hub of your community.
- **Explore the Opportunities:** The field of K12 education provides numerous opportunities and flexibility to try new things and grow in your particular area of interest.
- Work/Life Balance: Do rewarding work while still having the opportunity and support to pursue your personal interests.
- **District Points of Pride:** [Districts to add any district-specific messaging in support of the promise]

PLANNING

With the success of this campaign heavily reliant on the support and participation of all 12 Chester County school districts, it was imperative that we gain full support from all 12 Chester County district

superintendents and the CCIU executive director early and often, as well as continue to keep all HR and communication directors in the loop.

Key Audience Engagement

1. Engage and inform all Chester County HR and Communication Directors

While the countywide recruitment committee was comprised of HR and communication representatives from multiple districts, it was imperative that HR and communication directors from all 12 districts plus the CCIU remain informed with each step of the development process. Not only were we going to need their support and participation to make the campaign come together, but we also needed to ensure that they had all information at their fingertips if they were to be asked questions by their superintendents. As such, meetings and communications were conducted as follows:

- September 2022: HR and communication job-alike meetings Outline countywide idea and requested volunteers to serve on the countywide recruitment committee.
- October 2022: HR and communication job-alike meetings Shared outcomes of initial committee meeting and presented the identified next steps in terms of a positioning exercise, campaign proposal development and goal of a December 2022 superintendent presentation.
- *November 2022:* Emailed messaging document and campaign plan proposal to all HR and communication directors in advance of superintendent presentation.
- December 9, 2022: Email to all HR and communication directors with outcomes of superintendent presentation, plus outline of next steps and timing for the campaign development process.
- January 2023: Emailed proposed campaign concept to all HR and communication directors in advance of superintendent presentation.
- January 13, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors with outcomes of superintendent concept presentation, plus outline of next steps for their engagement in campaign visual development including model release forms and photography brief.
- January 26, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors recognizing the early contributions of districts, plus updates regarding staffing partner sponsors and asset reminders.
- February 2, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors with campaign development status updates and reminders in anticipation of February 10 superintendent presentation.
- February 10, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors with outcome of superintendent presentation and campaign launch schedule.
- February 16, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors with first week of launch overview.
- March 3, 2023: Email to all HR and communication directors with campaign statistics for first
 two weeks of the campaign with visuals they could share with their Superintendent and Board
 of Directors.
- Ongoing: Continue to be available for monthly HR and communication job-alike meetings to
 provide campaign updates. Additionally, campaign stats are planned to be emailed at the
 beginning of each month, as well as updates on new campaign materials and rotations
 scheduled or in process.

2. Gain Support of Superintendents

Each of the 12 school districts in Chester County have their own brand, so when you consider sharing a campaign that represents all of them collectively it was imperative that the superintendents not only feel comfortable with the concept and approach but also with the tactical

plans as well. Prior to the launch of the campaign, three brief presentations were given at the beginning of the monthly superintendent job-alike meeting:

- December 9, 2022: Committee representatives from the CCIU (communications) and three of the districts (1 HR, 2 communications) presented the <u>proposed campaign plan</u> for superintendent feedback and approval. A fuller <u>campaign plan document</u> was provided as well.
- January 13, 2023: Committee representatives from the CCIU (HR, communications and marketing) <u>presented the initial campaign visual and messaging concepts</u>, as well as the proposed sponsorship packages.
- February 10, 2023: Committee representatives from the CCIU (communications) and one new district (HR and communications) presented the initial group of launch tactics for superintendent approval.

At the beginning of each month <u>campaign metrics</u> are sent to the district HR and communications directors to share directly with their superintendents, allowing them the opportunity to take more ownership in the campaign and for the opportunity to discuss additional outreach they can do at the district level leveraging the templates provided. Plans are in the works to present in front of the superintendents one more time toward the end of the school year to provide campaign results and to discuss proposed next steps in the campaign evolution.

3. Actively Engage Staffing Partner Sponsors

To leverage the existing relationships and partnerships between identified staffing partners and the school districts they support, the <u>initial invitation</u> to sponsor came directly from the HR director they had the best relationship with. Staffing partners expressing an interest were then connected to a single point of contact at the Chester County Intermediate Unit who answered all questions and worked to finalize <u>sponsorship agreements</u>. While often sponsorship communications stop there, it was important to all districts and the campaign that staffing partners also remain in the loop on the progress of the campaign. Communications have been sent to-date to staffing partners regarding launch timelines and announcements as well as initial campaign metrics. This level of communication and transparency, as well as the quality of the campaign, led to one silver sponsor elevating their sponsorship to gold and another sponsor joining in post-launch. Staffing partners will continue to receive at the beginning of each month campaign metrics.

Campaign Development

The initial committee discussions and positioning exercise led to the <u>key message buckets</u> previously identified and helped establish a baseline on which to build the campaign plan and associated campaign concept.

1. Proposed Campaign Plan (Nov. 2022 – Dec. 2022)

As determined by the countywide recruitment committee, the campaign's central strategy is to drive overall awareness of diverse roles in the field of education through public mass media channels; then funneling interested individuals down more directly to the district level for specific job openings. The key component of the campaign, and core call to action, was determined to be a central campaign landing page that would provide key benefit information and lead visitors to each of the individual district landing pages based on their area of interest or geographic proximity. The tactics outlined in the campaign plan were prioritized into "core" and "optional addons." Within "core" the committee selected the most cost-effective paid options with the greatest reach, along with a more organically driven campaign toolkit for districts to leverage individually. Add-ons are to be considered if funds collected via sponsors allow for budget expansion. The final proposed

<u>campaign plan</u> was <u>presented to superintendents</u> at their monthly meeting in December 2022 and received full approval.

2. Concept Development & Review (Nov. 2022 – Jan. 2022)

Based on the key message buckets developed by the committee during the initial positioning exercise, the CCIU communications team developed three campaign lead options that were presented to the committee in November 2022. Each of the three options sought to highlight a specific component pulled from the messages. In the end, the committee chose to pull components from two of the options presented and landed with the following campaign leads:

- Series of rotating headers:
 - Transporting Our Future Highlighting bus drivers
 - Supporting Our Future Highlighting support staff, instructional assistants and classroom aides
 - Protecting Our Future Highlighting maintenance and custodial staff
 - Feeding Our Future Highlighting cafeteria staff
 - Connecting Our Future Highlighting IT staff
 - Teaching Our Future Highlighting teachers
- Subhead: There's a place for you in education.
- Campaign Hashtag: #Place4UinEDU

The campaign messaging leads were <u>presented in December</u> to the Superintendents and given approval. From there the CCIU communications team developed two visual concept options to help bring the messaging to life. The <u>two concepts</u> were presented to the committee for review in January 2023 and one concept was selected to move forward. The <u>selected concept</u> was shared with the superintendents on January 13 and approved.

3. Asset Generation (Jan. 2023 – Feb. 2023)

The strength of the selected concept relied heavily on the ability to feature existing staff from all 12 Chester County school districts and the CCIU actively interacting and engaging within their work environments. This was going to be a heavy lift, especially with four out of the 12 districts not having designated communication directors on staff, so it was imperative that it was a well-coordinated effort. During the January 13 presentation to the superintendents, we made them aware of the desire to feature staff from each of their districts and that directions would be provided to their communication and HR directors. Knowing we had six headlines, each featuring a different job category, we sent out an email to all communication and HR directors first asking them to select two headlines they would be willing to support. This helped ensure we had equal representation across all six headlines. We then followed that up with a detailed photography brief and model release forms in both English and Spanish. For those districts who do not have communication staff, the CCIU offered to send our own communication specialists to their district to assist in capturing the desired photos and videos. As soon as images began being uploaded into our shared campaign Google drive, we began publicly recognizing the efforts and encouraged others to view the images as further examples of what we were aiming to achieve. Ultimately, we were able to collect photography representing all six headlines prior to the mid-February launch, and by the end of February we had received photos from all 12 school districts and the CCIU.

4. Launch Campaign Materials (Jan. 2023 – Feb. 2023)

Focusing initially on the campaign landing page, launch press release, social media and radio script, and utilizing the superintendent-approved message leads and visual concept, the CCIU communications team pulled in the district-provided assets to fully develop an initial launch package of campaign materials. The materials were shared with the countywide recruitment committee for review and feedback, and once tweaked, were presented to the superintendents at a February 10,

2023 meeting. The superintendents unanimously approved to move forward with the launch of the campaign.

IMPLEMENTATION

With superintendent approval, the countywide recruitment campaign was officially launched on February 14, 2023 with plans to continue momentum throughout the planned five-month campaign.

Initial launch focus

The main focus at launch was to get information out as quickly as possible, maximizing reach to our desired audiences. As such, many of the first launch materials were a one-way push of information with the main call-to-action being to visit the campaign landing page. The initial launch package included:

- Central Campaign Landing Page: This campaign was a collaborative effort between the CCIU, the 12 Chester County school districts and our valued staffing partner sponsors. It was imperative we presented a united front but with the ability for viewers to quickly access information directly with each of the partners. ChesterCountySchoolJobs.org became the primary call-to-action for all campaign materials. The site featured a rotation of district images from the six job categories, a quick overview of key benefits of working in education, an interactive Chester County map featuring all 12 school districts and the CCIU with individual links to each of their employment sites, and a section featuring our staffing partner sponsors each also with links to their employment sites.
- **Joint Press Release:** Furthering the collaboration was a joint press release sent out to all local media outlets on the first day of the campaign. The press release also called out directly our gold sponsors as key partners in education.
- Social Media: A mix of geo-targeted social media ad placements and organic posts worked to get the desired message out quickly. Paid placements utilized a carousel framework on both Facebook and Instagram to highlight all six headlines/job categories to showcase the variety of opportunities available within education. For the first two weeks a larger budget was utilized to gain reach both in Chester County and the surrounding counties. The organic posts leveraged the broader "place for you in education" message aiming to generate as much organic sharing of the posts as possible. All placements utilized the unifying hashtag of #Place4UinEDU.
- Google Ads: Based on research of terms centered around job searches, the CCIU communications team selected a grouping of key terms and associated campaign messaging for viewers located within Chester County.
- Radio: Working in partnership with the Beasley Media Group, the CCIU communications team
 identified two radio stations covering the southeastern PA region that catered to a higher
 percentage of listeners actively seeking employment. The CCIU team in collaboration with the
 countywide recruitment committee developed the <u>radio scripts</u> and then worked with Beasley to
 record and implement. Radio began March 6 and is scheduled to run for two months.
- **District Toolkit:** Through use of the shared Google Drive, all districts were given access to original photography, social media templates and a customizable poster for placement within their communities.

Continuing the Momentum

To ensure the campaign remains fresh over the five months, the following is being planned:

• Image Rotations: Every two weeks images on the website and in social will be updated to ensure continued rotation through all 12 school districts and the CCIU.

- **Social Media Targeting:** While the launch began with a broader push, plans are to test targeting specific job categories to various target audiences to see if additional focus on particular headlines may lead to additional levels of interest.
- **Video:** Both b-roll and testimonial video footage has been captured by half of the school districts and represents all six headlines/job categories. A central message video will be developed and added to the campaign landing page, as well as shared with all districts. The video will be featured on social media both in its entirety as well as in shorter clips.
- **User-Generated Content:** A second district toolkit push will feature social media frames and stickers, as well as email templates, so that districts can encourage their staff to share on their own social media pages their positive experiences working in education.
- **Digital Billboards:** At the completion of radio, to maintain awareness on the roads, digital billboard ads will be strategically used along main travel corridors in the county.

EVALUATION

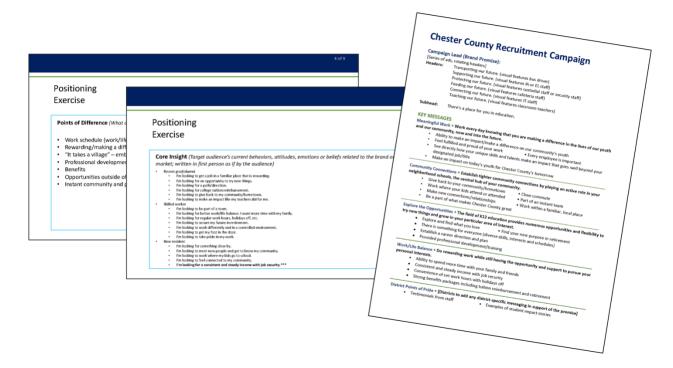
Data is key to the ongoing support of this awareness campaign by both the superintendents and our staffing partner sponsors. As such, the following campaign metrics have been and will continue to be shared at the start of each month, as well as at the conclusion of the campaign:

- 1. **Campaign Reach:** Information will include Facebook and Instagram reach, Google ad impressions and the estimated reach via radio and billboards. In terms of awareness, this is important to understand how many people we are touching.
- 2. **Campaign Landing Page Site Traffic**: Information will include total site visits, the number of unique site visitors and the average session duration. This information is pertinent to understanding how many of those reached took an action, and the session duration helps provide perspective on how much time they spent exploring the opportunities.
- 3. **Traffic by Source:** Understanding what campaign tactics are helping drive site traffic is important to ensuring the most effective use of the budget. As a team, we will keep close eye on this and adjust budget as necessary to those channels performing the highest.
- 4. **Interactive Map Clicks:** The interactive Chester County map on the campaign landing page is the key portal to the individual districts. We will be reporting how many people have explored the map itself, but also how many direct clicks have occurred from the map to the district websites. This will be reported for each individual district.
- 5. **Staffing Partner Clicks:** Specific Google Analytics have been set up to measure the number of clicks from the landing page to each participating staffing partner. How the staffing partners are represented on the page may be edited to ensure maximum exposure and engagement.

While planning and implementation continue as we review the impact and results of various tactics, there have clearly been some initial positive results seen as it relates to reach, site traffic and engagement as this <u>sample report</u> shows. From the awareness perspective, we are moving in the right direction. As we continue through this campaign, we are eager to connect with our district partners to further measure the impact on actual application numbers. Will this campaign have an impact in filling the more than 600 positions the county currently has open within the CCIU and our districts?

Countywide Recruitment Committee Positioning Exercise

Exercise and resulting messaging document



Superintendent Campaign Plan Presentation

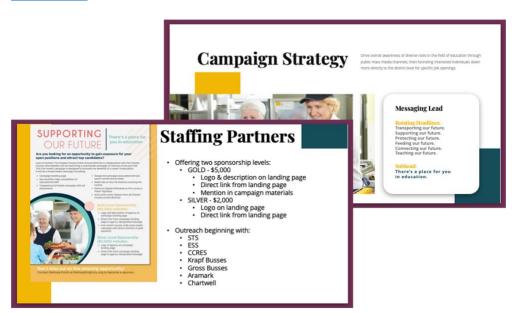
Presentation and supporting campaign plan document



Initial Visual Concept OptionsPresentation



Superintendent Selected Concept Presentation Presentation



Staffing Partner Sponsorship

Flyer and sponsorship form

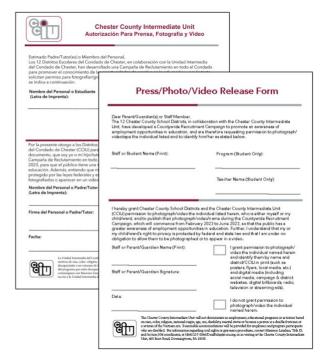




District Asset Collection

Photography Brief and Model Release Forms (ENG & SPN)





Superintendent Launch Approval

Presentation



Campaign Website

ChesterCountySchoolJobs.org



Social Media Sample Posts



Joint Press Release

Press Release & Associated Image



Sample Monthly Metrics Report Report

