



WE BELIEVE COMMS HUB Messaging Handbook

About

This Messaging Handbook, informed by audience research, message testing, and real-world experience, offers practical tools and guidance for delivering resonant messages about the value of public education — particularly to a **parent audience**.

Together, we can use effective messages to remind Americans that public education is essential to our future and is something that should be invested in, not abandoned.

How to Use

Using the table of contents, you can jump straight to the topic most relevant to your work. Use this handbook as a reference whenever you're developing messages for a meeting, equipping supporters with talking points, drafting a social media post, or writing testimony.

For any questions on this content, please email webelievehub@wearerally.com.

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Messaging Best Practices



General Principles



Start with personal impact and experience. Focus first on how an issue affects individual families before connecting to broader community or national impacts. Wherever possible, help audiences tap into their personal experiences and memories and really see themselves in your message.



Leverage shared values. Begin with widely held beliefs — like the importance of safe, respectful schools or that all kids should have a fair shot. Our research shows that fairness is a particularly salient value for our audience.



Talk about all kids, not just some kids. For our messages to resonate with general audiences, they need to feel like what we're saying applies to them and their kids. Even when talking about impacted communities, tie it back to the experience or environment for all kids.



Hope over fear. Constant crisis messaging has lost its power, and positivity can overcome cynicism and spark motivation. It's also important to celebrate your local school and community.



Keep language neutral and plain. Avoid politicized terms like SEL or DEI.



Don't repeat opposition frames. Even to refute them.



Choose trusted messengers. Messages are most effective coming from people with direct experience, like students, teachers, other parents, and local leaders.



Make CTAs specific, local, and relevant. Consider what your particular audience would be willing to do. For example, not all parents will attend a school board meeting. Point them toward realistic actions: where to donate, what to sign, where to show up, what to share, etc.

What Parents Want and Care About

No surprises here: parents are clear about what matters most for their kids' education. Based on qualitative and quantitative research, these are the shared values and priorities that rise to the top. **All our messaging should be grounded in these simple, commonsense ideas that parents hold true.**

The bullets below are organized in order of resonance for our audiences, based on our research.

Parents want...

- Classrooms where every kid feels **safe, seen, and supported**.
- Success that goes beyond academics—raising **confident, kind, and well-rounded** young people.
- Schools that prepare kids for the **real world**—whether that means learning new technology or navigating tough topics with honesty and care (and age-appropriateness).
- Opportunities for kids to learn and play with peers from **all backgrounds** (ethnic, financial, spiritual, or developmental).
- Access to a great public school that **fits their needs**.
- **Fair funding and resources** so schools can do the job right.
- To be **in community** with other parents, families, and neighbors.



Our Visionary Message for Public Education



What makes public education powerful is that it's **for everyone**. It's not about good schools for a few—it's about great schools for every kid.

Most of us walk through the doors of a public school at some point in our lives. It's where we made our first friends, joined teams and clubs, and were inspired by teachers who believed in us. It's one of the few shared experiences we have as Americans.

And that experience should be a great one for every child—no matter who they are or where they come from.

Public schools don't pick and choose. They're a place where everyone belongs, and everyone has a fair opportunity.

We know our public schools aren't perfect. But walking away doesn't help our kids.

That's why we're fighting for great schools, fair funding, real learning, and belonging for **every child**.

Why we lead with this vision:

We know it's time to say something different—merely defending public education won't resonate. We need a message that is positive and forward-looking, but also grounded in parents' reality. That means acknowledging the real frustrations and challenges within public schools, while still focusing on what's possible.

This vision does three key things:

- **Centers on fair opportunity for everyone.** This resonates strongly with our core audiences.
- **Connects to shared memories and experiences.** When parents can see themselves and their families in the story of public education, they're more likely to believe in its promise and join us in strengthening schools.
- **Acknowledges real frustrations.** Empathy builds credibility, and giving voice to concerns positions us as the ones to own the solutions.

Messaging by Issue

The sections below provide messaging guidance and content around a variety of pressing issues in public education.



Vouchers

VOTER ATTITUDES

Ballot initiatives to create or expand voucher programs have consistently been **rejected by voters in state elections since the 1970s**.

A recent poll conducted by All4Ed just before the 2024 election found that 68% of voters prefer to “increase funding to improve public schools” over “increase funding to give parents vouchers,” including 58% of Republicans and 82% of Democrats. Even in conservative states like Kentucky and Nebraska, where voters overwhelmingly supported Donald Trump,

voucher proposals were roundly defeated. Despite this clear public opposition, state lawmakers continue to pursue action around vouchers, often under pressure from well-funded special interests.

MESSAGING GOALS

Show the losing math and debunk the “choice” frame that pro-voucher advocates often employ. But always focus on personal impacts and experiences, rather than centering our argument solely on systemic consequences.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

Start with Shared Values	We all want what is fair and best for our kids. Every child deserves a strong school that supports them and sets them up for success.
Define the Impact	But vouchers are a bill of goods. They push a false promise of “school choice”—when in reality, it’s the private schools that get to choose, turning kids away for any number of reasons: disability, test scores, income, religion.
Repeat This Refrain	Vouchers aren’t free. They’re fraud.
Highlight the Benefits	Every family will make the choices that are right for them. But our government’s job is to strengthen the public schools our communities count on—not divert dollars to private institutions that don’t serve every child. When we strengthen our public schools, more students have better outcomes. That funding goes toward [insert programs and resources that resonate for you and your audiences] , which all students benefit from.
Call to Action	Keep our public money in public schools—it shouldn’t go to unaccountable private institutions and interests, who can pick and choose who they serve. [Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
<p>School vouchers give families and parents freedom of choice.</p>	<p>I also want to secure the best education possible for my kids. But vouchers don't actually provide us with more or better choices. Private schools can pick and choose which kids get to attend because of disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, test scores, religion, or whatever reason.</p> <p>And, in most cases, vouchers don't even cover the full tuition, leaving families to cover thousands of dollars in costs. Meanwhile, that money is gone from the public school system, giving us one less good choice for our kids.</p> <p>Instead of putting our public funds toward unfair voucher programs for some, let's use them to strengthen our public schools, so they're a better choice for all our families.</p>
<p>Vouchers help low-income students escape failing public schools and level the playing field.</p>	<p>I agree—every child deserves a safe, high-quality school. But vouchers aren't the solution. Most families can't use them: in many rural areas, there aren't private schools at all, and even where there are, vouchers rarely cover the full cost, putting that option out of reach for most low-income families.</p> <p>Meanwhile, vouchers drain money from the public schools that the vast majority of kids still rely on. So what happens to them?</p> <p>If we want to help every child—especially those in under-resourced schools—we need to keep public money in public schools and invest in making them stronger for all kids and families. That's how we make sure every child has a fair shot.</p>
<p>Parents know what's best for their children, not government-run schools.</p>	<p>Of course parents want what's best for their kids. Public schools are accountable to us because they're run by local communities, school boards, teachers, and parents. Vouchers take our public money out of these schools and send it to private ones that don't have to answer to families or serve all students. If we really want to empower parents, we should invest in strong local public schools that welcome every child so parents have the choice of a great public school in their area.</p>
<p>Vouchers use education funding more efficiently than public schools.</p>	<p>I understand the desire to get the most out of every dollar we spend on education—we all want that. But vouchers aren't more efficient: They just create two ineffective systems.</p> <p>Vouchers take money from public schools to cover a fraction of the cost of private school tuition for a small number of kids. Meanwhile, public school resources are drained, leaving those kids and families with larger class sizes, fewer resources, and worse outcomes.</p> <p>That's not efficiency—real efficiency means investing in public schools so every child has a fair shot and all families have the choice of a great public school in their area.</p>
<p>You're telling me I have to keep my kid in a failing, unsafe public school?</p>	<p>This isn't about any individual family's choice—you need to do what's best for you and your kids. But the government shouldn't be in the business of decimating public schools through universal voucher programs. We should be investing in strong local public schools that welcome every child, so parents have the choice of a great public school in their area.</p>

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
“Failing public schools”...	Avoid reinforcing misconceptions or repeating opposition language: “I share concerns about students getting what they need to succeed—and I want to make sure every child has a safe, quality school to attend.”
Villainizing or shaming parents who want to send their kids to private schools...	<p>Focus on the systemic impact of vouchers to public schools and the surrounding community: “When public funds go to private schools, there’s less available for things like teachers, school counselors, and classroom materials in our neighborhood schools.”</p> <p>Empathize with the desire to provide the best education for one’s child: “Of course parents want what’s best for their kids—and they should do what they need to do. This isn’t about any individual family’s choice. But the government shouldn’t be in the business of decimating and defunding public schools.”</p>



School Funding

VOTER ATTITUDES

A majority of American voters continue to support [increased funding](#) for public schools and believe their local public schools are underfunded, though support for increased funding varies by demographics and regions. There is an overall lack of urgency to fix the system. Many Americans feel cynical or overwhelmed when it comes to fixing the entire education system—but they still believe in their local public schools and want them to succeed.

MESSAGING GOALS

Help voters overcome cynicism by tapping into local pride and getting specific about how school funding impacts them and their families.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

Start with Shared Values	We all want our kids to get a good education that helps them reach their full potential.
Define the Impact	<p>But when our schools aren't fairly funded, kids and families get shortchanged and lose out on the resources and opportunities that help students succeed. There's real frustration when we don't see the results we want for our kids. Outdated facilities, teacher shortages, and cuts to arts, sports, or mental health supports all add up.</p> <p>And it's not just about how much money goes into schools—it's also about how it's spent. Evidence shows that investing smartly in teachers, student supports, and learning tools makes the biggest difference for kids' success.</p> <p>[Insert real-life examples from your community, about outdated facilities, teacher shortages, activities being cut, etc.]</p>
Highlight the Benefits	<p>When schools are fairly and smartly funded, our kids win—and so do our communities. More funding per student is proven to increase lifetime earnings, add years of education, and reduce poverty across generations. That's powerful.</p> <p>What does fair, smart funding look like? It looks like all our kids having the tools and resources they need:</p> <p>[Name the specific tools and resources that are most resonant and relevant for your audience]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well-trained teachers, smaller class sizes, and individualized support• Nutritious meals and mental health supports so kids can focus on learning• Career training and exposure to cutting-edge technology that open doors to opportunity and prepare kids for the future• Updated buildings and playgrounds that keep kids safe and engaged• Arts, music, and sports, so our kids can discover their talents and interests <p>When our kids have the tools and resources they need, it strengthens opportunities and outcomes for all.</p>
Call to Action	<p>We need to get bolder and smarter about public school funding.</p> <p>[Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]</p>

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
More money won't improve student outcomes.	I get the frustration — too many students still aren't getting what they need to succeed. Making sure our schools are funded fairly is about having money for what matters: healthy meals, more counselors and teachers, and other resources and interventions that are proven to improve student outcomes.
Public schools are failing.	<p>We have high expectations for our public schools — as we should. But in order for them to deliver for our kids, they need the right funding and to spend it smartly. Too many communities need stronger public schools.</p> <p>Right now, a huge part of the problem is that they're being asked to do a lot with very little. When schools lack basics like technology or mental health support, students are left behind. Our schools and students need to have the resources to succeed.</p>
All public schools know how to do is waste money.	There's real frustration when we don't see the results we want for our kids. Parents can see firsthand that we're asking schools and teachers to do more and more with less, from adjusting to rapidly evolving technology to addressing growing mental health challenges. But when there is fair, smart funding, schools can invest in what matters most to families — great teachers, counselors, up-to-date technology, and targeted support for students who need it. That's not waste — that's about schools meeting and exceeding families' expectations.
Scores and results indicate our public schools are failing. Why would we give them more money?	Scores like these are unacceptable, and our kids deserve better. But what did we expect — our schools have been underfunded and under attack for decades, and this is the result. The response cannot be to punish students further by continuing to pull funding from their schools. The response must be to invest in our kids and our schools, funding them smartly and fairly, with a laser focus on boosting student achievement — for all kids.

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
Simply saying “increase school funding”...	<p>Be specific about where funding actually goes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Quality teachers” • “Counselors” • “Healthy meals” • “New supplies” • “Tutoring”
Simply saying “funding”...	Try to say “fair funding” where it makes sense.
Speaking generally about where funding is needed...	Call out specific communities that stand to benefit, particularly those that are relevant to your audience.
“Equity,” since not everyone understands or connects with the term...	<p>Use terms like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fund schools based on student needs” • “Targeted support for students who need it” • “Fund schools fairly” • “Make sure every kid has a fair shot” • “Level the playing field”

What Kids Learn and Experience in School

VOTER ATTITUDES

A 2023 Ipsos survey found that most Americans, when presented with real-life examples, oppose book bans and restrictions on what students learn, discuss, or participate in. Instead, over half support laws prohibiting book bans, and most believe race, gender, and sexual orientation belong in the classroom. When asked how schools should handle these topics, 50% favored an age-appropriate curriculum, 32% supported teachers answering student questions, and only 17% said such topics should be completely off-limits.

At the same time, curriculum or other programs meant to promote inclusivity and belonging are often

negatively characterized as “DEI.” While many Americans agree with the underlying principles of DEI—such as ensuring all students feel welcome and have equal opportunities—they are more hesitant when presented with the term “DEI” itself.

MESSAGING GOALS

Focus on shared values over partisan politics. These issues are about preparing all students for success in a diverse and complex society—by fostering respect for diverse cultures and providing an honest, accurate understanding of our nation’s history.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

Start with Shared Values	Parents, educators, and communities want schools to bring out the best in our kids and give them the best classroom experience possible.
Define the Impact	But politicians want to prevent our kids from learning about our diverse and complex society. Instead of letting local communities decide what’s best, they’re pushing policies that make kids feel like they don’t belong in their classrooms. [Insert specific examples and stories from your own community]
Highlight the Benefits	When kids feel safe, seen, and supported, they learn better and have a better experience at school. And we all agree that our schools should prepare kids not just to pass tests, but to live and lead beyond the classroom walls. We all want our kids to learn empathy, cultural awareness, and confidence—skills they’ll need whether they’re working on a team, running a business, or solving complex problems.
Call to Action	We all want well-rounded kids who can succeed in the classroom and beyond—and who feel good about themselves at school. [Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
Parents know best, and our kids shouldn’t learn about these inappropriate topics at school	I get it—no parent wants their child to grow up too fast or encounter challenging topics before they’re ready. But age-appropriate lessons about the world we live in will prepare our children to grow up and be successful in our complicated world. Teachers are trained to introduce books and lessons at the right times to help our kids gradually understand complex history and other topics—and it’s also important for making sure every kid knows they belong in their classroom.

DEI/wokeism lowers academic standards/achievement in our schools	I don't want lower academic standards, either. Students actually perform better academically when they feel a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom. Programs like mental health services, social-emotional learning, a diverse teacher workforce that reflects the students they teach, and inclusive books and lessons don't lower standards—they help students reach them. Cutting these supports holds kids back.
DEI is reverse discrimination	No one wants their child to be treated unfairly. But this isn't about giving some students special treatment. It's about making sure every student feels seen, safe, and supported so they can do their best. Part of that is making sure our teacher workforce is as diverse as possible—in all senses. When schools include all kinds of voices and experiences, it creates a better learning environment for everyone and helps all kids grow into respectful, confident adults.
DEI/wokeism is a political ideology and has no place in the classroom	Of course, no one wants politics getting in the way of their child's education. But teaching kids to treat others with respect, to work with people from different backgrounds, and to make sure every student feels like they belong—that's not politics. That's just good teaching. We all want schools and classrooms that make sure every kid can focus, learn, and succeed.

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
"Diversity," which has become a landmine, even though parents understand the benefits when explained in different terms...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Meet new people and experience communities that are different from their own" • "Learning to respect and work across differences" • "Diverse or different perspectives"
"Equity"...	<p>Many people are more familiar with and supportive of the concept of "fairness":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Every kid should have a fair chance" • "Fair opportunity for all" • "Making sure every child has what they need to succeed" • "A level playing field"
"Curriculum censorship," which can sound vague...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Censoring what kids learn" • "Censoring school subjects" • Or "censoring books and lessons" <p>You can also use the idea of "the freedom to learn" interchangeably with censorship.</p>
"DEI," which is a polarized buzzword...	<p>Spell out what these programs would accomplish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Programs—like mental health services, social-emotional learning, and books and lessons that reflect all students" • "Including all kinds of voices and experiences" • "Programs that make every student feel safe, supported, and like they belong"

LGBTQ+ Inclusion

VOTER ATTITUDES

While a loud minority may support efforts to restrict how LGBTQ+ people are represented in schools, [most Americans—including parents and teachers—oppose censorship and support protecting LGBTQ+ students from discrimination](#). Many parents are understandably concerned about bullying and school safety more generally, which is something we can tap into here.

MESSAGING GOALS

Shift the conversation away from fear-based narratives and toward a broader understanding that inclusive school policies create safer, more supportive environments for all students.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

Start with Shared Values	Every child should feel safe, seen, and supported in their classrooms.
Define the Impact	<p>But we know all too well that bullying is a serious issue that affects all our kids. Whether the bullies are in the classroom, behind screens, or are divisive politicians who want to rip books off shelves and tell our kids who they can or can't be, it can't be tolerated.</p> <p>Bullying aimed at LGBTQ+ students doesn't just harm those kids—it creates a culture of fear and exclusion that touches everyone. All around the country, too many students don't feel safe to be themselves. It's not just their learning that suffers—it puts them in real danger.</p> <p>[Insert specific examples and stories from your own community]</p>
Highlight the Benefits	<p>Our kids are happier, healthier, and more successful when classrooms are kinder, more respectful places. In addition to taking actions to stop bullying, lessons and books should also model, in age-appropriate ways, what it looks like to support all kids—no matter where they come from, who they are, or how they identify.</p> <p>The data is clear: schools that adopt inclusive policies see real benefits. Bullying and harassment go down, students feel safer, and everyone can focus more on learning. In fact, schools that affirm and support LGBTQ+ students see higher GPAs, lower absentee rates, and stronger feelings of belonging for everyone.</p>
Call to Action	<p>Let's ensure every classroom gives our kids the freedom to be themselves.</p> <p>[Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]</p>

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
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Schools shouldn't be pushing gender ideology on my kids.	I understand these topics can feel unfamiliar or even uncomfortable—every parent wants their child to feel safe and respected at school. Schools aren't teaching kids what to think about personal identity. They're creating space for kindness, respect, and preventing harm. I agree that this should be done in age-appropriate ways, but it's so important to our kids' success and learning that we build a school culture that helps all kids feel safe and do their best.
Trans students are a safety risk for my kids.	Every parent wants their kid to be safe at school—I feel the same way. And of course, schools should take safety seriously. What actually makes schools safer is making sure all students feel respected and supported. That's when kids learn, focus, and succeed—and that's what we all want for our children.
When there's an exclusionary policy, i.e., banning trans kids from sports, a bathroom ban, a ban on preferred pronouns...	<p>We all can agree: we want our kids to feel safe and supported at school. When students are singled out, either by bullies or discriminatory school policies, it doesn't just hurt them—it disrupts the entire classroom. It makes it harder for all kids to focus and learn, and it doesn't set the example of respect and kindness that we want our kids to see. It also makes it impossible for teachers to actually teach our kids when they're worried about what laws they're breaking just by doing their jobs with care and respect.</p> <p>Creating a school culture where every student is seen and valued is how we make sure all kids can succeed. When students feel safe and teachers feel trusted, schools work better for everyone.</p>

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
"Protect vulnerable transgender kids," talk more broadly about protecting and supporting all kids...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Respect each other for who we are" • "Support all young people to be their authentic selves and pursue their dreams" • "Every child should have the freedom to be themselves"
"Gender-affirming care," which is jargony and political...	<p>Use everyday, relatable language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Essential healthcare" • "Care that supports mental health and well-being for trans youth"
"[The opposition] is homophobic/transphobic"...	Avoid blanket pejoratives that can shut down dialogue. Focus on the common ground we share: "We all want strong, supportive schools where every kid can succeed"
"Politicians"...	<p>For greater credibility, be more specific about the type of politician you're naming, so as not to issue a blanket indictment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Divisive politicians" • "Extremist politicians" • "Partisan politicians"

Immigrant Students

VOTER ATTITUDES

While there is currently heightened concern and mobilization about the rights and safety of immigrant students, the same level of awareness does not uniformly extend across the general voter population, even as immigration enforcement actions on or near school grounds have had a profound impact on students' well-being and educational outcomes:

- 61% of surveyed educators observed declines in academic performance due to heightened fears about family safety and immigration status
- Fear of immigration raids leads to high absenteeism rates (observed by 58% of surveyed educators), increased likelihood of grade retention (14% higher for children aged 6-13), and increased dropout rates (18% higher for ages 14-17)

- Nearly half of educators observed increased bullying of immigrant students, and 85% reported students expressing fears of deportation while at school

Parents share many of these concerns, particularly around bullying, academic decline, and school safety. About two-thirds say they are also worried about the impact of deportations on school communities. When presented with values-based messaging that affirms immigrant students' and their contributions to school communities, 80% of respondents reacted positively.

MESSAGING GOALS

Help people understand that every child—regardless of origin or background—deserves a quality public education, and make it clear that what happens to one student touches the whole classroom.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

Start with Shared Values	We teach our kids to be kind, to treat everyone fairly, and to stand up to bullies. Those values shouldn't stop at the school door—they should guide how we treat every student.
Define the Impact	When politics target immigrant kids, it doesn't just hurt them—it creates fear and chaos that disrupts learning for everyone. No parent wants their child in a classroom filled with anxiety, confusion, or cruelty. [Insert specific examples and stories from your own community]
Highlight the Benefits	Our schools shouldn't just teach reading and math—they should teach kids how to work with others, solve problems, and grow into strong, compassionate adults. That's the kind of environment we all want for our kids, and it starts with our school's policies. When schools accept and nurture every single kid, the whole community benefits.
Call to Action	A quality education for all is what America has always stood for—and that's a promise we want to keep for our kids and communities. [Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
Immigrant students drain public resources.	A quality education for all kids is what America has always stood for—and turning our backs on immigrant kids just creates more division and long-term costs for all of us. When children grow up without a strong education, it limits their ability to contribute and creates bigger costs down the line. But when every student gets a fair shot, we grow a better-prepared workforce, a stronger tax base, and a more connected community.

Immigrant students pose a threat to school safety.	Immigrant students are kids, just like anyone else, who want to learn, make friends, and build a better life. Every parent wants their child to feel safe at school—I do too. We need to deal with safety issues and bullying that are hurting all of our kids, and that starts with making sure our schools are built to respect and support everyone.
Immigrant families don't deserve access to public school resources because they didn't pay for them.	Immigrant families do contribute—through billions in taxes, work, and community life. A quality public education open to all kids has always been part of the American promise. When every student has the chance to learn and succeed, our schools and communities grow stronger.

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
“Our immigration system is broken” or “stop ICE raids”...	Focus on what we are for, not what we're against: “We can make our schools places where every child feels valued and protected”
“These policies are racist”...	Focus on the impact of the policies, rather than using a blanket, hot-button qualifier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Divide and distract” • “Spreads hate and division” • “Creates fear and chaos”
“Hard-working immigrants”...	Don't qualify who deserves safety and who does not: “All families, regardless of what we look like or where we come from”

Federal Support for Public Education

VOTER ATTITUDES

The real-time dismantling of the Department of Education is happening despite [opposition from the majority of American voters](#)—even [across age groups and educational backgrounds](#). Seventy percent of likely voters who attended college oppose abolishing the department, as do 57% of those who did not attend college.

MESSAGING GOALS

Localize the issue by focusing on what matters most to families in their world: safe, supportive, high-quality education for their children. Connect the dots between those outcomes the critical support the federal government provides.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

<p>Start with Shared Values</p>	<p>We all want our kids to get a fair shot and a good education.</p>
<p>Define the Impact</p>	<p>But politicians and billionaires are working to dismantle federal support for public education, which means students will have fewer opportunities, be treated more unfairly, and see worse academic outcomes.</p> <p>Federal support for public education—across several agencies and departments—ensures our local schools have what they need to serve our kids: without that federal funding, our kids and families are getting cheated out of the public school experience we deserve.</p> <p>[Focus on the specifics most relevant and resonant for your audience, like:]</p> <p>Federal funding and resources...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee kids have school lunches. • Support children with disabilities and special needs • Fund Head Start programs for our youngest learners • Offer financial aid for higher education and guides families through the complicated financial aid process • Keep schools open and after-school programs available • Equip teachers with training and resources to best serve students • Deliver a lifeline to rural students and communities • Protect and supports students experiencing homelessness • Enforce civil rights laws and ensures equal access to education
<p>Highlight the Benefits</p>	<p>A quality education for all kids is what America has always stood for, and that is what we're at risk of losing. Our public schools do more than just educate our kids: they connect our families and communities and provide essential resources for everyone. They're places of opportunity, fairness, and success—not politics</p> <p>[Add specifics/personalization about your local public school—what you're proud of and why it matters]</p>
<p>Call to Action</p>	<p>Let's focus on giving every student the tools to succeed—not fueling political fights that hold them back.</p> <p>[Insert a specific, local, and relevant call to action you want audiences to take]</p>

REBUTTAL MESSAGES

If someone says...	Respond with...
<p>The department wastes money and fails to improve schools.</p>	<p>I agree that our public schools need to be strengthened. But these sweeping cuts to the Department of Education aren't targeting waste—they're actually targeting students and families.</p> <p>The ED directs critical funds to rural students and communities, students with disabilities, and others—and extremist politicians are taking that all away.</p> <p>Every child in America deserves a quality education—no matter their zip code or family income. We should be focused on policies that fulfill the promise of public education, not policies that tear it down.</p>
<p>The department undermines parents' rights.</p>	<p>Parents and educators want the same thing: schools where kids feel supported and ready for the future. I agree that families and schools should work together to provide the best education for our students.</p> <p>But in order for families and schools to best support students, they need the funds, resources, and protections that the Department of Education guarantees. Let's focus on real partnership—not political distractions.</p>
<p>The department promotes indoctrination.</p>	<p>We all want schools that reflect our community values and prepare kids for the real world. That's why curriculum decisions are made by states, local school boards, teachers, and informed by families.</p> <p>The Department of Education is actually focused on programs like special education, after-school resources, and school meals—things that local communities can't afford on their own, but are so important for our students' experience and success.</p>

LANGUAGE NUANCES

Instead of...	... Say this
<p>"We need the Department of Education"...</p>	<p>Keep the focus on people and impacts: "Federal funding allows for programs critical to student success in school and life."</p>
<p>"Spending cuts"...</p>	<p>Be explicit about what this is: "Cutting or defunding public education."</p>
<p>Getting trapped in a debate about federal versus state roles in education...</p>	<p>Keep the focus on the impacts on and outcomes of students: "...programs like special education, after-school resources, and school meals"</p>
<p>Getting into the weeds on funding mechanisms...</p>	<p>Talk about the real-world impact of cutting the Department of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Students will lose access to free, healthy meals" • "Students with disabilities won't have the support they need" • "Rural students will have fewer resources"