



Co-Creating Your District's Story With Families

A Simple 3-Step Framework for Building Trust, Reputation, and Enrollment

Enrollment doesn't begin at registration.

It's the outcome of trust, reputation, and the everyday experiences families have with schools.

Districts that stabilize or grow enrollment don't rely on campaigns alone.

They **co-create their story with families**; and support that story consistently across the system.

Step 1: Establish a Shared Story

Establish a shared story, together with families. This is not a slogan or a marketing message.

It's a **shared experience**, shaped over time, through everyday interactions.

A guiding question to ask as a district:

"If families could say one true sentence about our district by the end of the year, what would it be?"

Examples of shared stories:

- ♡ "My child is known and supported here."
- ⌚ "This district listens and responds."
- 🏡 "Every family belongs."

The most trusted story about your district is the one families tell each other.

When districts establish a shared story *with* families, it creates clarity, alignment, and trust across classrooms, schools, and departments.

Tip: Consider asking your families what they see as the most hopeful shared story for the year.

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Step 2: Co-Create the Moments and the Messages

Trust and reputation are shaped at **predictable moments** throughout the year, not just during major announcements.

Common high-impact moments include:

- enrollment and registration
- conferences and family check-ins
- attendance or behavior concerns
- grading cycles and transitions

For each moment, districts can co-create by asking:

- What should families *feel* here?
- What should families *understand*?
- What should families be able to *do*?

Inviting family input through listening, feedback, and shared reflection; ensures messages are clear, authentic, and responsive to real needs.

Step 3: Support Staff So the Experience Matches the Message

Families don't experience "the district."

They experience **teachers, schools, and front offices**.

Supporting staff is essential to turning a shared story into a lived experience.

Effective support includes:

- clear, shared communication priorities
- examples of positive outreach
- consistent expectations for tone and responsiveness
- language access and accessibility supports

When staff are equipped and aligned, everyday interactions reinforce trust rather than unintentionally eroding it.

Why This Matters

Trust is built through consistent, respectful communication

Reputation is shaped by shared family experiences

Enrollment is driven by family confidence and choice