

Kristan Abeshouse, Director of Community Relations
Deana Callipare, Director of Communications
Ashley Wellman, Out of School Time Activities Coordinator

Environmental Charter School (ECS)

5525 Columbo St.
Pittsburgh PA 15206
412-247-7970

Contact: deana.callipare@ecspgh.org

2023 Out of School Time
Activities IMC Campaign

“ECS Engage”

Gold Medallion Entry

The Environmental Charter School is a tuition-free K–12, public charter school in Pittsburgh, Pa, and serves approximately 1,000 students from more than 43 zip codes. ECS combines the academic rigor of the best public schools with a multi-disciplinary, “out-the-door” learning approach rooted in real-world problems that build active, engaged and empathetic citizens. The district’s communication department consists of 1 full-time individual who supports organization-wide initiatives such as out-of-school time activities and community engagement.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
“ECS Engage” Synopsis	3
“ECS Engage” Summary	4
Challenge	4
Research	4
Goals	5
Objectives	5
Publics	5
Key Messages	5
Tactics	5
Timeline	6
“ECS Engage” Results	7
Evaluation	7
Conclusion	8

“ECS Engage” Synopsis

“ECS Engage” was an integrated marketing communication (IMC) campaign that spanned from August–mid September, 2023, that combined partner relations, DEI, out of school time programming marketing, and student and family relations at the Environmental Charter School (ECS) in Pittsburgh, PA. This multi-departmental campaign addressed two district challenges:

- A decrease in student participation in out of school time programming.
- A lack of awareness of out of school time programming offerings.

Remaining rooted in ECS’s brand, culture and messaging, the communication, out of school programming and family engagement departments partnered to determine shared goals, objectives and tactics based on internal and external research. Through this collaborative process, the following goals were identified:

- Provide positive, interest based, mission aligned and authentic out of school time programs for students at every grade level while ensuring diverse participation.
- Successfully host an activities fair that will increase the number of students who participate in out of school time programming.

To accomplish the above goals, the team devised the “ECS Engage” campaign which includes unified key messages, targeted publics and several tactics associated with the following objectives:

- Inform 90 percent of ECS’s families of the ECS Activities Fair and Fall out of school time programming registration by Monday, Sept. 11, 2023.
- Receive 300 registrants for the ECS Activities Fair by the day of the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- Generate an attendance of 225 individuals at the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- Obtain 225 student participants in the Fall out of school time programming by the sign up deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023.

“Engage ECS” allowed district personnel to collect data for future activity and family engagement initiatives, and the campaign follows the four step strategic public relations planning process to successfully complete each objective while ensuring an accurate and positive perception of the school district’s K–12 out of school time program.

“ECS Engage” Summary

The “ECS Engage” campaign continually followed the four step strategic public relations planning process of research, planning, implementation and evaluation (RPIE). The team reviewed, conducted and evaluated several data points from previous years as well as external information to influence “ECS Engage.” The team devised the campaign with a DEI lens to prioritize and increase family engagement, and tactics were created and altered based on the success and data analysis and metrics collected as the campaign progressed.

The summary of the campaign below details the research, objectives, tactics and results that yielded a successful campaign. “ECS Engage” demonstrates a clear planning process and provides links to a few of many supporting materials.

Challenge

ECS had a variety of students who wished to participate in out of school time programming district wide (K–12), however, involvement decreased post pandemic and only 11 participants completed the 2022 Activities Fair survey that provided feedback for areas of improvement. Negative responses included:

- Lack of programming at the Primary School (K–2) level.
- The event itself needed to occur in a larger space.
- Lack of awareness of out school time offerings K–12 and the event itself.
- Not enough spaces in high demand out of school time programming.

To increase involvement in ECS’s K–12 out of school time programming for the Fall 2023 season and combat the negative narrative surrounding some elements of the previous year’s Activities Fair, ECS proposed an integrated marketing communication (IMC) plan called “ECS Engage” that spanned from August–mid September, 2023 and combined partner relations, DEI, out of school time programming marketing, and student and family relations at the Environmental Charter School (ECS) in Pittsburgh, PA. The communication, out of school time and family engagement departments collaborated on “ECS Engage” to maintain brand, culture, messaging and enhanced student experiences.

Research

The team reviewed survey feedback from the 2022 Activities Fair and past marketing analytics while researching industry event registration data to determine the best tactics to achieve the “ECS Engage” objectives. Decision making data points included:

- Number of participants at the 2022 Activities Fair:
 - ECS did not have an event RSVP for the 2022 Activities Fair.
 - 90 families signed into the event.
 - Those 90 families yielded approximately 150 participants at the fair.
- Negative survey feedback outlined in the “Challenge” section of this document.
- Positive feedback involving the use of partner organizations, live demos, hands on activities and well informed club advisors at the 2022 Activities Fair.
- Previous out of school time enrollment numbers which equated to 200 participants during the Fall 2022 season.

Goals

- Provide positive, interest based, mission aligned and authentic out of school time programs for students at every grade level while ensuring diverse participation.
- Successfully host an activities fair that will increase the number of students who participate in out of school time programming.

Objectives

- Inform 90 percent of ECS's families of the ECS Activities Fair and Fall out of school time programming registration by Monday, Sept. 11, 2023.
- Receive 300 registrants for the ECS Activities Fair by the day of the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- Generate an attendance of 225 individuals at the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- Obtain 225 student participants in the Fall out of school time programming by the sign up deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023.

Publics

- Current ECS families/students
- Students who participated in out of school time programming in the past

Key Messages

- ECS is a welcoming family that offers a robust out of school time program in support of the whole child.
- ECS is hosting its 2nd Annual Activities Fair to showcase the upcoming out of school time offerings and partnerships.
- Activities Fair participants will receive early bird registration for Fall activities.
- In connection with the district's mission and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the ECS Activities Fair and out of school time programming promotes Goal 3, Good Health and Well Being, Goal 15, Life on Land, and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals.

Tactics

- **Inform 90 percent of ECS's families of the ECS Activities Fair and Fall out of school time programming registration by Monday, Sept. 11, 2023.**
 - Send a personal email that invites staff to attend the event.
 - Add the events and the programming registrations to the live, public calendar.
 - Create a website [blog post](#) about the Activities Fair.
 - Add a save the date and informational blurb in the August and September district wide newsletters.
 - Add the save the date in the weekly grade level communications starting Aug. 25 and ending Sept. 8.
 - Create an [informational poster](#) to showcase in the buildings' hallways.
 - Send a [stand alone Activities Fair communication](#) the week prior to the event.

- **Receive 300 registrants for the ECS Activities Fair by the day of the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.**
 - Create an event [RSVP in Constant Contact](#) to track event registrations and communicate reminders and updates regarding the Activities Fair.
 - Share the t-shirt fundraiser and event pick up on [social media](#) to encourage participation.

- **Generate an attendance of 225 individuals at the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.**
 - Ensure partner participation and share out by providing a RSVP deadline and media materials for their own promotion.
 - Provide partners with a thank you gift for their participation to maintain partner relations.
 - Team up with the facilities and tech teams to ensure table/booth placement and proper use of equipment needed to successfully host the event.
 - Create a vendor site map to inform families of the available out of school time offerings and allow them to easily locate a program that fits their student's interests. View the [front of the map](#). View the [back of the map](#).
 - Create vendor table tents for easy visibility and knowledge of activity.
 - Send a [reminder communication](#) to the event registrants the day prior to the Activities Fair with reasons to attend:
 - Early out of school time programming registration.
 - Demonstrations by PearlArts, Capoeira and Cooking with Terra.
 - Hands-on activities like seed planting, bracelet making and more.
 - Create your own t-shirt with 3C Signs LLC (all proceeds benefit the ECS scholarship fund).
 - Pictures with Hero the Hawk (the ECS Mascot).
 - Raffles and giveaways.

- **Obtain 225 student participants in the Fall out of school time programming by the sign up deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023.**
 - Host the 2nd Annual Activities Fair on Sept. 12, 2023.
 - Provide all Activities Fair participants a code for early bird out of school time programming registration.
 - Provide a QR code on each vendor/activity table that leads users to the sign up for that particular program while they talk to the advisor.
 - Send a [follow up email to the participants](#) with a reminder of the Fall out of school time offerings registration deadline and a survey.

Timeline

All tactics and their associated sub tactics are recorded in the communication department production schedule gantt chart as well as a campaign creative brief. In the production schedule, each tactic is categorized in one of five categories (General IMC, Internal Marketing, External Marketing, Internal Public Relations and External Public Relations) and the duration of the project, target audience, who is responsible for its completion and where it falls in the PESO model (if applicable) is noted.

“ECS Engage” Results

- The stand alone Activities Fair communication had a 76% open rate and 49 clicks that yielded a 2.8% click through rate.
- The online blog post received 14 views and 31 interactions by Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- A total of 332 individuals registered to attend the Activities Fair by Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- A total of 246 individuals signed into the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.
- For the Fall out of school time programs registration, 301 students signed up from Intermediate, Middle and High School by the deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023. Primary School does not have traditional out of school time offerings for the Fall season, but is embedding programming into its winter and spring seasons.
- A total of 7 individuals completed the after event survey.

Evaluation

Inform 90 percent of ECS’s families of the ECS Activities Fair and Fall out of school time programming registration by Monday, Sept. 11, 2023.

Based on the results listed above, the team will focus on adding additional quantitative metrics to determine the level of awareness for next year’s event. While it was the team’s objective to inform 90% of its families, only 76% opened the communication and only 14 users viewed the blog post. While the email open rate is well above industry average, the team is determined to increase accessibility and knowledge of this in future years. Additional efforts may include SMS, direct messaging or calling families that might have communication barriers.

Receive 300 registrants for the ECS Activities Fair by the day of the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.

Last year, ECS did not have an event registration for the Activities Fair, and therefore, does not have previous data for comparison. However, a total of 332 individuals registered to attend the 2023 Activities Fair by Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023. With a 10% higher than anticipated registration rate set in the objective, the team believes it successfully marketed the event to families to pique their interest enough to register for the Activities Fair.

Generate an attendance of 225 individuals at the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.

When conducting research, the team learned that approximately 25% of individuals who register for a free event do not attend. If “ECS Engage” met the minimum for the second objective of receiving 300 event registrants, then approximately 75 of them would not attend. With this information, the team formulated the third objective to generate an attendance of 225 individuals at the Activities Fair. A total of 246 individuals signed into the Activities Fair on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023. This is 8.9% above the objective goal and 96 more participants than the previous year deeming it a success. [View photos from the event.](#)

Obtain 225 student participants in the Fall out of school time programming by the sign up deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023.

Keeping in mind that some students would sign up for Fall out of school time programming that did not attend the Activities Fair, the final objective was created based on the district's population. If the out of school time team received 225 student participants in the Fall season, this would engulf approximately 20% of the district's student population. The team was happy to report that it received 301 out of school time enrollments which equated to about 29% of the district participating in out of school time activities. This surpassed the team's objective by 76 students. With enrollments ranging from students district wide, a diverse population was secured.

Due to some enrollments occurring before the Activities Fair occurred, the above number does not include student-athletes who participated in Middle School Cross Country, High School Basketball and Volleyball, and Intermediate School Girls on the Run. In addition to the fall activities present at this year's Activities Fair, SkiECS, a winter program, also attended and received an enrollment of 43 individuals.

Conclusion

ECS's 2023 2nd Annual Activities Fair IMC Campaign, "ECS Engage," was a collaborative effort with the communication, out of school time and family engagement departments to provide information about out of school time offerings and increase participation in comparison from the previous year. The campaign's very existence is evidence of the team's dedication to following the four step strategic public relations planning process of research, planning, implementation and evaluation (RPIE). Through a series of measurable objectives and corresponding trackable tactics, it is ECS's aspiration to host a 3rd Annual Activities Fair that produces a higher return based on the information and data collected from the 2023 Activities Fair.

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact Deana Callipare, Director of Communications at deana.callipare@ecspgh.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.