



A Great Idea

communications

May 2004

what?

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth Goes On TV to Educate the Community

who?

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth
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Summary:

The Executive Director of Philadelphia Citizen's for Children and Youth hosts "Education Roundtable," a monthly half-hour televised discussion which provides parents and other stakeholders with an objective assessment of the Philadelphia school district's progress. The district invited PCCY to convene the roundtable, which consists of 2 journalists, the director of the local radio station, and the editor of the Philadelphia Public School *Notebook*, an independent quarterly newspaper.

The program debuted in February 2004 with an introduction to PCCY and a recap of education issues over the last year. The March 2004 program dealt with school violence, in response to the 23 children who have been killed on school property this school year in Philadelphia.

Key Elements:

- The show has four panelists, recruited by the Executive Director in consultation with the Communications Director and chosen for their depth of knowledge of education issues. (The two journalists on the panel are on the education beat for their respective papers—*The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Daily News*.)
- The panelists have agreed to participate every month. If one cannot attend a show, it is taped with fewer panelists or a PCCY staff member who is knowledgeable about the specific topic may fill in.
- The show's target audiences are teachers, parents, and concerned citizens.
- The school district already runs a cable station and produces a variety of programs, so it provides the studio, operates the cameras and TelePrompter, etc. (And the cable station involves students in all behind-the-scenes aspects of the production!).
- The school district broadcasts PCCY's programming through the city's agreement with the local cable company.

- PCCY has full editorial control of the show's content, which allows the journalists to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. No one receives payment for participating.
- PCCY's board is not directly involved in the program, but supported the initial concept and the continued development of the show.

Process:

- During a planning meeting in January 2004, PCCY's Executive Director, Communications Director, and the regular panel of reporters chose topics for the first three months.
- The Communications Director provides the Executive Director with a script and questions for the panel two to three days in advance of taping.
- The topic is sent to the panelists a day or two before the taping.
- No calls are taken during the show. Since the program runs multiple times during the month, a call-in format is not ideal.
- A disclaimer appears at the end of the program, emphasizing that all opinions expressed are those of the panelists, not of the school district or PCCY.
- The Executive Director and the Communications Director are the only PCCY staff members currently involved. In the future, other staff members may be asked to serve as panelists.

Things to Think About:

- Even though the show only airs for one half-hour, the production and editing process can take up to 9 hours. Keep in mind that unexpected events, such as traffic delays or panelists feeling uncomfortable in front of the camera, may occur.
- PCCY is considering building shows around hot topics and inviting special guests as potential ways to increase the visibility of the show. The organization also plans to do field interviews to complement the topics and issues discussed on the program. In order to implement these activities, PCCY would need to seek additional staff and funding.

Outcomes:

It's too early to draw conclusions about the show's impact on its target audiences, but the show is helping PCCY increase its visibility within the community and strengthen relationships with individual journalists.