

# NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools  
**NC ACCESS PROGRAM**  
NC Department of Public Instruction

## Marketing and Recruitment

## Removing Barriers

### The Local Community

#### Implementation Description

In its third year of operation, Pocosin Innovative Charter (PIC), located in rural northeastern NC, strategically expanded its marketing efforts using a multifaceted approach based on the needs of prospective families. Understanding the needs of the community has been shown to be an important step prior to launching an effective “community-building” initiative (Pasha,



2019). PIC worked with a marketing company to create flyers for mailing to local zip codes. They quickly

realized that Facebook is a key source of information in the local area, so they increased their social media presence and moved toward an on-line application process, which was linked from their Facebook account. School leadership increased the frequency of their postings to ensure families had up-to-date and accurate



information. They also developed a procedure to decrease messaging response times, which has resulted in increased enrollment.

In conjunction with the direct marketing efforts, the school utilized NC ACCESS funds to purchase a bus. School leadership created a map of all current families, identified areas with existing bus

#### About This School

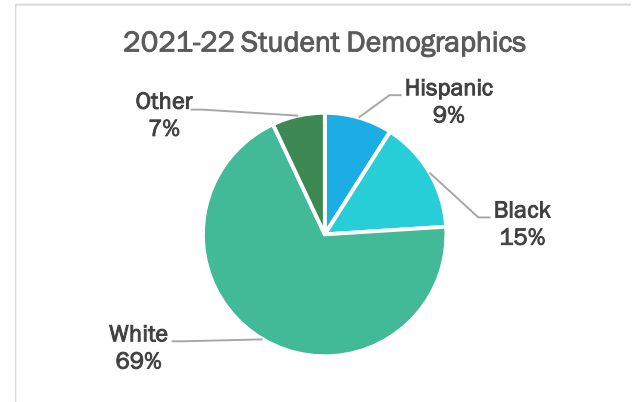
#### Pocosin Innovative Charter

We provide a unique educational choice for our community and region. We share a passion for providing our children with a rigorous curriculum designed to teach them skills connected to our local history and culture and to prepare them for a successful future. We have a focus on agriculture and provide classes and opportunities for students to actively participate in agriculture activities.

**Year School Opened:** 2019-20

**Grant Awarded:** 2021-22

**Initial Grade Levels Served:** K-8



**% ED Student Population:** 39%

**Urbanicity:** Rural / Creswell, NC

**Persons in Poverty (Washington County)<sup>5</sup>:** 24.3%

accessibility, and mailed information to prospective families in these areas. In addition, they were able to add new bus stops in areas where the need was greatest to ensure that transportation was not a barrier for families. The ability for students to ride a bus to school is critical for many low-income families and an important marketing message (Sanchez, 2017).

## Results

There are about 1500 school age children in the PIC service area, and next year the school expects to be at capacity with 250 students enrolled with additional students on a waiting list.

Enrollment numbers have steadily risen over the three years of operation from 182 in 2021 to 230 in 2022 and a projected 255 in 2023.

The data shows that 52% of families learned about the school via word of mouth and an additional 38% were referred by a friend. The school shares information through their website and Facebook directly reaching another 10% of families in this way. Although families documented learning about the school via word of mouth, since Facebook is the usual form of communication between families in this community, it is likely that the Facebook content was a critical and effective way to share information family to family within the community.

## Challenges

Identifying community needs and tailoring a marketing plan that addresses those needs was difficult in the initial stages. Hearing from community members and an understanding of the local culture helped the school align all marketing strategies to ensure they were able to reach their target audience.

## Future Modifications

PIC will partner with a NC based marketing firm, adjusting their recruitment efforts as needed to reach the local community.

## Critical Components

### Getting Started

It is important to secure a knowledgeable marketing firm that understands the needs of the target community. Familiarity with the community ensures that all marketing materials and activities resonate with the people the school desires to serve.

### Ongoing Supports

School leadership will continue creating and updating recruitment materials to expand the existing recruitment plan.

## Equity Connections

Upper and middle class families generally have the resources and social capital with which to navigate school options for their child(ren). Low income families tend to have fewer resources and less information on which to make the same decision (Villavicencio, 2013). Therefore, schools must utilize outlets which are relevant and accessible. PIC found social media to be a valuable tool to reach

families in their community. Additionally, low income families are less likely to have reliable transportation, which often prevents families from enrolling their child(ren) in a school of choice (Teske et.al., 2009). Providing transportation levels the playing field and removes a significant barrier for families in poverty.

## Research

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