

# NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



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

Marketing and Recruitment

Increased Reach

## Debunking the Myths

### Implementation Description

Ridgeview Charter School (RCS), a Title 1 school located in Gastonia, NC, opened its doors for students in 2019 offering a high-quality education for their diverse student population. In an effort to increase their footprint in the community, Ridgeview sought to engage families and enhance their marketing strategies.

Ridgeview utilized NC ACCESS funds to hire a consulting firm, Nixon & Co. Consulting Group, to develop a plan to engage families and the community at large. Research has shown that when schools support and engage families in their child(ren)'s education, community bonds are formed, and students grow more academically and socio-emotionally (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). Therefore, Ridgeview knew their work needed to begin with families who were already a part of Ridgeview. The school solicited input from families by forming a small focus group to better understand the public perception of the school. One outcome from the focus groups was the growing awareness of a number of myths about the school circulating in the community that needed to be addressed. Therefore, school leadership created a Debunking the Myths flyer to be shared at all community engagement and recruitment events. Additionally, during the focus group meetings, families were equipped to become ambassadors for the school. Ridgeview found their time with parents to be productive and beneficial for schools and families alike.

Additionally, with financial support from NC ACCESS, Ridgeview hired a marketing specialist to bolster their community presence. Outsourcing tasks, such as marketing, can free-up school staff to focus on their "core operations" within the school (Bretz, 2002). The marketing specialist provided a refresh for the school's website and Facebook page to ensure they were updated

### About This School

#### Ridgeview Charter Academy

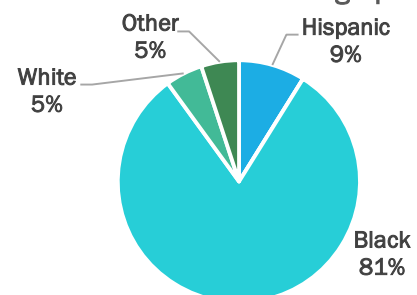
Ridgeview Charter School is a K-8 school with a mission "to provide students with a global perspective. Ridgeview offers an environment that values and appreciates differences and prepares students to participate and thrive in an increasingly integrated world." Ridgeview uses the International Curriculum and supports the mastery of foreign language offering both Japanese and Spanish to all students. With a stellar academic program and research-based psycho-social support, Ridgeview will provide a learning environment conducive to the acquisition of critical thinking skills that will equip students to graduate college.

**Year School Opened:** 2019-20

**Grant Awarded:** 2020-21

**Initial Grade Levels Served:** K-5

#### 2020-21 Student Demographics



**% ED Student Population:** 95 %

**Urbanicity:** Rural / Gastonia, NC

**Persons in Poverty (Gaston County)<sup>5</sup>:** 11.6 %

September 6, 2021

and effectively communicated the school's mission. Research has shown that it is important for schools to build their social media presence to engage educational stakeholders, such as "*parents, students, teachers, and the community*" (LeRoy, 2018). Additionally, the local radio station aired an interview with the principal to answer questions families may have about the school. Finally, to increase the school's visibility, Ridgeview provided families with yard signs to create organic opportunities for currently enrolled families to serve as school ambassadors to their neighbors.

## Results

The community is developing a growing awareness of Ridgeview's offering as evidenced by an increase in enrollment for the 2021-22 academic year. Enrollment increased from 250 in 2020-21 to 275.

## Challenges

RCS faced the obstacle of addressing public misconceptions about their school. Once they became aware of the community's perceptions, they were able to explicitly address the myths through flyers, networking, social media communications, and in-person events.

Nixon & Co. planned to provide Professional Development (PD) opportunities for staff members to help them further develop their relationships with students' families and the community; however, these sessions were postponed in response to COVID-19 safety concerns.

## Future Modifications

Moving forward, Ridgeview has plans to continue engaging families through the formation of a staff and parent committee, where members will work together to build strong community connections. Additionally, Ridgeview staff will participate in the professional development sessions with Nixon & Co. that needed to be rescheduled due to the pandemic.

## Critical Components

### Getting Started

School leadership felt that contracting consultants and marketing specialists prior to the school's opening was crucial to achieving effective marketing success and community engagement.

### Ongoing Supports

RCS believes that ensuring family engagement was critical, because it instilled ownership and strengthened bonds between home and school. School leaders plan to continue growing these relationships moving forward to ensure school success.

## Equity Connections

RCS invited families to participate in focus groups that guided the school's marketing and recruitment efforts for the year. When school leaders ask marginalized families, such as those living in poverty, for input on school decisions, it communicates respect and paves the way for authentic and effective family engagement (Brewster & Railsback, 2003).

## Research

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5. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>