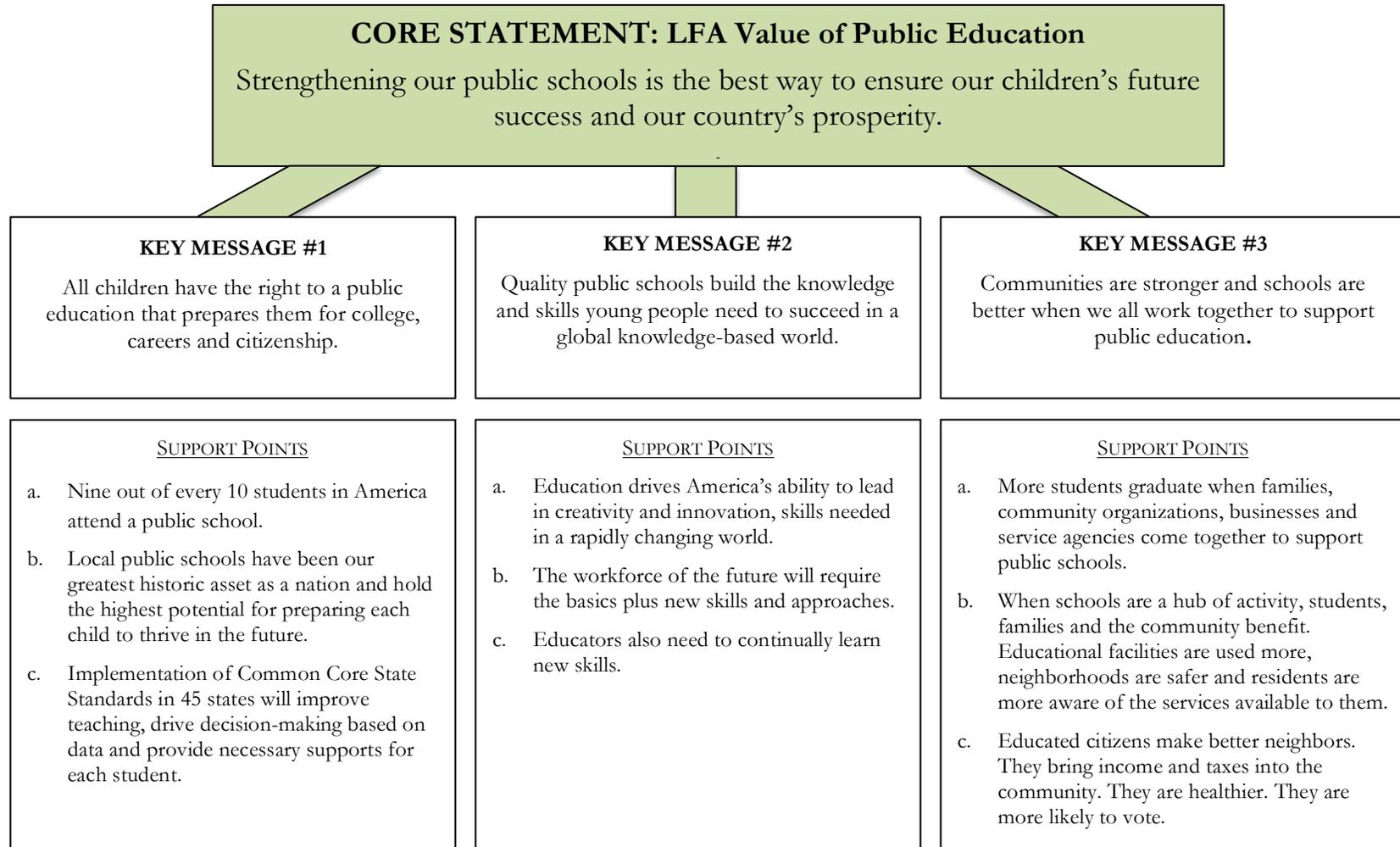


Learning First Alliance Message Map



Slogans

Our public schools. Our nation's future.

An educated America is a better America.

Want a stronger America? Improve public education.

About Message Maps

Message mapping is a scientifically based process for developing the core statements that define an organization and assembling those statements in a framework that can be used to guide all public discussions (media interviews, speeches, presentations) as well as printed and electronic collateral (publications, websites, emails).

The process is based on decades of research, including findings that the brain processes information in series of threes (maybe fives if we are particularly gifted, with few stressors and competition for our attention). By focusing on key concepts and sound bites, we take messaging from a laundry list of bullet points with no particular order and break it down into three key communications streams that align with the goals and work of the organization.

This process was originally developed by the public health industry as a way to effectively relay complex information to a wide range of stakeholders. It has since been adopted by a number of industries, and Collaborative Communications Group currently uses it to provide structure, organization and a sense of priority to message development.

An effective message map consists of three key components:

Core Statement – This is the defining message, sometimes referred to as the first sentence of your “elevator speech.” The Core Statement is the declarative on your work, identifying what you do, why the work is credible and what you hope to achieve.

Key Messages – When you offer your Core Statement, the likely question is, “What does that mean?” The three Key Messages are designed to support the Core Statement. One (or all) of these three messages should be in all future communications on the value of public education.

Support Points – When one delivers a Key Message, there can be pushback for specific proof that the message is true. The three support points under each Key Message are designed to support the Message. Ideally, these Support Points are statistics, case studies or stories from the field. As LFA’s communications progress, these Support Points will change and new Support Points may be added to reflect new developments and data in the field. The Support Points are only used when necessary to support a statement or illustrate an assertion.

As originally intended, the Map is designed to be read from top-to-bottom, left-to-right. For these purposes, the left-to-right construction isn’t as important, as we have constructed a triad of Key Messages that all feed the Core Statement. Supporting Points are ordered in place of importance, so a user of the Map knows that Support Point 1.a. is the first to deliver if pushed on Key Message #1.

The structure is intentional. The boxes are designed to keep the messages short and of useful value. As currently proposed, some of our messages run a little long. We have allowed that because we recognize this is a major shift in approach, and the messaging process will be evolutionary over the short term. As new research data or recommendations become available, for instance, that would be reflected in the Map. So please consider this an organic platform on which future communications would be rooted. It does not have to be followed word-for-word in every instance, but the key intentions should be adhered to so all audiences see and hear the primary messages in all vehicles, whether they be in person, in print or online.

This map is intended for a general audience, meaning was developed to have some appeal for most stakeholders. As the LFA messaging on the value of public education grows and expands, we recommend developing a series of stakeholder audience-specific Message Maps, which would address the particular needs and viewpoints of priority audiences (administrators, superintendents, educators, funders). These audience-specific Maps would be tailored from the general Map, and would reflect the same key messaging, with adjustments for specific audience needs.

As the LFA messaging on public education evolves, we may also consider Maps on specific issues, such as teaching or leadership or community involvement or other key concepts that will trigger public interest or stakeholder questioning. The Map is a tool, providing a visual blueprint for effective messaging. This is not only true of the message as a whole; it also applies to the key issues or priorities for the initiative moving forward. Ultimately, Message Maps demonstrate priorities and flow, and can be successfully used by speakers, writers and intermediaries to carry the LFA messaging forward.