AE MARKETING GROUP CASE STUDY





#### HOW TO COMPETE AGAINST BETTER-FUNDED BRANDS AND STABILIZE MARKET SHARE LOSS

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the fourth largest school district in the United States. With more than 600 schools, the system provides education to approximately 400,000 children.

The CPS vision is that every student in every neighborhood will be engaged in a rigorous, well-rounded, instructional program and will graduate prepared for success in college, career, and life.

### ASSIGNMENT

Help local school brands build authentic relationships in the communities they serve using co-creation.

### CHALLENGE

How can CPS compete against Charter Schools with larger budgets?

### RESULTS

Market share loss stabilized while community engagement and student test scores increased at local levels.

## **AN INDUSTRY IN FLUX**

Facing budget constraints and increasingly stiff competition from rising charter school alternatives within the city, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) found itself facing a serious problem with both its brand message and experience. As a result, the nation's fourth-largest school district turned to AE Marketing Group to find brand solutions.

"We instantly felt the magnitude of advertising that the charter schools were dumping into local communities," Brian Walker, CEO and Founder of AE Marketing Group, said about working with CPS to address its challenges. "It became clear that we couldn't outspend the competition."



# **TEACHING THE TEACHERS**

Instead of spending big, Chicago Public Schools would soon learn a big lesson about just how powerful the creation of authentic and relevant relationships can be as a brand force. In order to foster these relationships, AE Marketing Group met with local CPS leadership and using co-creation focused on four core strategies:

- 1. Look at the brand as bigger than any single marketing/media message and recognize that operational improvements are critical to the overall student experience.
- 2. Build a brand communication strategy around the idea of "our" in order to better connect parents and students with teachers and staff.
- **3. Equal focus on afterschool and academic programs** in order to provide a safe environment that fuels individual interest and promotes student camaraderie.
- 4. Create a network of community partners to strengthen and deepen local neighborhood ties.



#### KRISTIN BLATHRAS CPS Official

"AE Marketing Group's approach to branding allowed us to market our schools in a way that is meaningful to the community we serve."

## **REPORT CARDS**

Walker stressed to CPS officials that, "Your brand can't just make a promise and communicate it. Chicago Public Schools must live that promise each and every day and with everyone who comes in contact with its brand."

Following a brand strategy pivot, fresh creative and a grassroots effort to improve CPS engagement with both students and parents, the school district saw that:

$\checkmark$	Market share loss <b>stabilized</b>
$\checkmark$	Parental involvement <b>increased</b>
$\checkmark$	Student test scores <b>improved</b>



#### MICHAEL BEYER CPS Official

"AE Marketing Group inspired us to elevate the story of our brand in an era when schools have constant competition."