

# Taking Control of the Task Force Narrative

10<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## Overview

Columbus City Schools is under attack by our labor partner the Columbus Education Association. We have lost control of the narrative about the Task Force. We have allowed the Board Room to be a bully pulpit, for our opponents. The District is in a Communications Deficit. We have not articulated our vision for better aligning resources.

**Now, because of this Communications Deficit, we have zero public trust on building closures. Simply articling our vision better is no longer a viable option.**

**We have to challenge CEA on the facts and narrative, at every opportunity.**

**CEA is walking the Board down the same road as the Strike. We will not win by lying down. We have to fight.**

**We are not choosing to go to war. CEA has already attacked CCS. We will not get stronger unless our opponents get weaker.**

## Goals

1. **Dominate** the Board Room.
2. **Climb** out of the Communications Deficit.
3. **Assert** our Vision for CCS above all other competing views.

## The Board Room

What happens now:

1. Outside organizations and individuals are permitted to misinform, present information disingenuously, and outright lie all while going **unchallenged** in our house.

2. Board Members are **silent** about the Task Force at the Board table. We do not state our position, affirm our commitments, and when we do we do not speak with one voice.

What must happen now:

1. We can no longer allow anyone to come into the Board's house and spread lies and misinformation. We must challenge every objectively false statement.
2. Every person at the Board table **must** speak in support of the task force effort. Every person at the Board Table must speak and do so with one voice.

### **Communications Deficit**

The position we are in now:

1. The facts are on our side, but the facts are not clear.
2. We do not have legitimacy or public trust on the Task Force.
3. Our opponents are working to soil the entire process. **This is their Strike Playbook.**
  - a. Misinform the public.
  - b. Accuse CCS of wrongdoing.
  - c. Poison the process to ensure no changes are made. Rather than fight us on the merits.

What must happen now:

1. We must challenge CEA on the Facts and Narrative at every opportunity.
2. Call out bad behavior.

### **Our Vision**

The position we are in now:

1. We do not talk about our vision.
  - a. Because we do not talk about our vision it is not important,
2. Because our vision is not important and unheard we have no future story or product to sell. Without a product to sell our community has nothing to believe in.
  - a. If our community has nothing to believe in:
    - i. They cannot believe in the District.
    - ii. They cannot believe in the Board.
    - iii. They cannot believe in the Superintendent.

- b. When people do not have faith and believe in their government, they turn to charlatans.
- 3. Our vision will not matter until we are out of the Communications Deficit.
  - a. We will not climb out of the Communications Deficit until we take control and Dominate the Board Room.
    - i. The entire District is the Board's Room. We must assert ourselves, the facts, and our vision in every corner of the District.

What must happen now:

- 1. The Board and Administration must agree on a combined vision for the future of the District as it relates to the task force. Central themes need to include:
  - a. We are doing this to make CCS better.
  - b. More staff, more resources in fewer buildings with more students will improve student outcomes.
  - c. By not taking action we are hurting all 46,000 students in CCS.

## Action to Take Control

- 1. Nothing else matters
  - a. We are in a fight not just to close buildings or improve education in CCS.
  - b. We are in a fight for our legitimacy. We must put all other inter and intra Board- Administration fights aside. The most important thing to all 9,000 employees must be this Task Force.
- 2. Mobilize the entire Enterprise
  - a. This cannot be one or two board members. The entire District needs to be focused on taking control of the narrative.
- 3. Counter every false statement
  - a. When CEA says we were not upfront about closing schools before the levy, play the 2023 Statement of Facts at the Board Meeting.
    - i. Take a clip of the CEA President (or other members) lying then play a video of the truth. everytime they lie.
    - ii. **When someone is calling you a liar and you have video proof USE IT.**
  - b. Live fact checking. We need all hands on deck. Appropriate and plentiful Central Office staff need to be at the Board Meeting prepared to live fact check any false statements made.
    - i. After all public comment speakers are done. The Board must go one by one to each objectively false statement and counter with the truth.
      - 1. Video highlight reel.

- ii. Stick to objective false attacks. We are above personal petty attacks.
    - c. Tuesday 14th Press Conference
      - i. We got hit hard Tuesday 7th. We have to hit back, we need to establish the facts. We need to call out bad behavior and lies. And we need to do it fast.
      - ii. At our oldest and worst most crumbling building
        - 1. In the Faculty Rep's classroom
    - d.
- 4. Take Control of our House
  - a. Next meeting at 3700 - Reclaim our space
  - b. No more competing agenda items
    - i. If we have good news to share, move all negative agenda items to the next meeting.
    - ii. If we have bad or "less than positive" news to share, move all bad or good news to the next meeting.
  - c. When outside organizations and individuals lie about us in our own House we must counter it every time. **No more polite statements.**
    - i. "When dishonest actors come to our Board Room, to our house and lie about what is actually happening in this District. You make it harder for us to serve our students. By coming here and spreading misinformation you are hurting the education of 46,000 students."
  - d. We must speak with one voice
    - i. Every single person from Kevin O'Connor to Jenny Vanover at the Board table must be speaking out against the lies.
    - ii. Every person must speak with a prepared, well thought out statement. This is too important not to take the time and be 100% prepared.
    - iii. We all must be "on message."
  - e. Bring in loud mechanical equipment if they hold a press conference on our land.
  - f. If the false statements are getting media coverage we need to call it out.
    - i. Reward good media outlets
      - 1. Priority seating or camera location.
      - 2. Priority interviews. Others can wait.
      - 3. Do not punish bad media outlets.
  - g. Our opponents are dangerous
    - i. It's dangerous to keep these buildings open.
    - ii. CEA is putting the health and safety of our children at risk.
- 5. Every Student gets a take home flier twice a week for the rest of the year.

1. The technology exists to target individual people digitally. Lets target our CCS families,
  - b. We have thousands of students ready to film videos in support. Get them in the studio before school ends.
10. CEA will listen to and respect the Board
  - a. Rearrange the speaking order. The Board President will speak on task force first.
  - b. If they chose to walk out during the Board President's statement make them choose to do so before the presentation
    - i. Increase the volume appropriately.
    - ii. Board Member needs to call it out
      1. "The folks who just left obviously don't actually care about the business of this District. Choosing to throw a tantrum and walk out before the Board has spoke on the task force is a clear demonstration that you don't care what the board thinks and you're just here for the theatrics"
        - a. Wait till after they leave
  - c. No more resolutions with CEA Leadership for the rest of the year.
11. Task Force Testimonials
  - a. Signed testimonial from every member of the task force rejecting CEAs claims as false.
  - b. Task Force member public comment or testimonial that exposes CEA President as unreasonable.
  - c. Video content for social
    - i. Pay to boost it
  - d. Task Force Chairs need to redeem themselves.
12. Drive a wedge between CEA and CSEA
  - a. Hold a hearing on the disrespect of classified employees by "other employees".
  - b. Stack public comment with classified employees speaking out against mistreatment by teachers.
  - c. Don't ignore the racial dynamics. Lay those cards on the table.
  - d. Pass out "I live in the Columbus City Schools District, how 'bout you?" Shirts, buttons and stickers to staff.
    - i. Fill the Board Room with people in shirts.
13. Meet with them on our terms
  - a. If CEA wants to meet we will do it on our terms at our office at our time that is convenient for us.

- i. Fill the room with staff and task force members. Do not tell them in advance.
  - ii. Change the location last minute.
    - 1. Let them settle into the Board Assembly room. Make them wait 10 minutes. Then move them to the cabinet room.
  - iii. Interrupt, don't allow them to use the space.
    - 1. They are not there to listen to us.
    - 2. They are not there to have an honest conversation.
    - 3. Authentic engagement requires two parties. They are not interested.
- b. We will establish the facts. We will establish their false statements.
- c. We will not allow them to avoid the falsehoods they have told.**

14. Stakeholder Clean up

- a. Electeds
- b. Corporate Partners
- c. Non-Profit Stakeholders