

Charter Schools Week Toolkit: Op-Ed Guidelines & Template

What is an Op-Ed?

An Op-Ed is a prose piece typically published by a newspaper or magazine which expresses the opinion of the author. Typically, an Op-Ed is intended to convince its readers of a specific position.

How to publish an Op-Ed

Most publications—whether print or exclusively online— have clear guidance for submitting op-eds on their website. This includes how long they should be (word count), what email address to send to, etc. When in doubt, Googling “how to submit op-ed to [your publication]” should do the trick.

When should I submit an Op-Ed?

Many outlets take a few days to consider an op-ed for publication—should they accept it, it could be a few more days before anything’s “live.” While there are outlets that move more quickly, it’s always good to build in several days’ time before your desired run date. To pack the most punch for National Charter Schools Week, your op-ed should run anywhere from May 1- May 5—meaning it will be ideal to pitch at the end of the week prior, roughly April 26-28.

What makes a great Op-Ed?

Be brief and get personal. Editors (and readers!) want to hear why this issue matters to you and—even more importantly—to those in your community. Also, a good rule of thumb is this: don’t *underestimate* your reader’s intelligence and don’t *overestimate* your reader’s background knowledge.

What should my Op-Ed include?

1. A lede (hook): Catch the reader’s attention.
2. Make your case:
 - a. Begin with your thesis/main argument
 - b. Present valid claims + evidence
 - c. *Strongly recommended:* Acknowledge and address counterarguments
3. Call-to-action: What should someone who agrees with your persuasive prose do now/next?

OP-ED TEMPLATE and accompanying EMAIL draft to editor at news outlet:

Note: This is a template, rather than a fully-built sample, because—in contrast to a press release—an Op-Ed must be personal, specific to a local context, and representative of the author’s real voice. The template below focuses on two main points, supporting families’ right to choose a school and highlighting continuous demand, but you are encouraged to develop your own key points in alignment with this year’s NCSW overall messaging. We hope everyone’s Op-Ed will be picked up, and we hope *not* to see any of the *exact* same sentences appear across them all!

Dear <Editor’s Name>,

May 1 marks the start of National Charter Schools Week, and I respectfully submit the below opinion piece for publication in **OUTLET**. **WHY THIS OP-ED IS RELEVANT TO THE PAPER’S AUDIENCE**. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from **OUTLET**.

Best,

NAME

ORGANIZATION

1) LEDE - Start with a compelling “hook” as a first sentence.

2) MAKE YOUR CASE - Below are two suggested points. Customize yours to your current charter context.

Develop Point #1:

Charter schools are unique public schools created to fill a need within a community, and as public schools, they are always tuition-free. National charter public school enrollment now surpass 3 million students—**XXX** of whom are in our state, and **XXX** of whom are right here in our city. These students are curious and powerfully capable - just like all kids. Their families chose a public charter school—not because they had to, but because they wanted to. I unequivocally support their right to do that, and I’m not alone in that.

Provide Evidence for Point #1:

A [2016 nationally representative survey](#) from [the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools](#) found that nationwide parental support for charter schools is strong. Nearly 80 percent of parents of school-aged children support allowing parents to choose which public schools their child should attend—and more than 70 percent of parents favor having a charter school open in their neighborhood.



Develop Point #2:

Family demand for charter public schools makes sense because of the academic results we're seeing.

Provide Evidence for Point #2:

The Center for Research on Educational Outcomes at Stanford University, found that charter schools do a better job teaching low income students, minority students, and students who are still learning English than traditional schools. Last year, we saw [PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT EVIDENCE OF DEMAND IN YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT]. [TRANSITION FROM QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE TO QUALITATIVE - PROVIDE AN ANECDOTE OR FAMILY-SPECIFIC STORY.]

Address counterarguments:

[THIS MUST BE HYPER-SPECIFIC TO LOCAL CONTEXT, POTENTIALLY CITING CONTEMPORANEOUS ARTICLES, MENTIONING RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE BILLS, AND/OR NAMING/ADDRESSING KNOWN LOCAL DETRACTORS - INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS.]

3) CALL-TO-ACTION - Recommended: Publicly-stated invitation to public official(s)

In celebration of our dedicated public charter school educators and the families they serve, [CITY/STATE] is holding [EVENT, DETAILS]. The event is open to the public, and I hope to see you there.

Ultimately, the best way to understand what charter schools are all about is to visit one. I would like to invite PUBLIC OFFICIAL(S) to see inspiring student achievement in action at SCHOOL(S) <OPTIONS INCLUDE INDICATING NO DATE/TIME FRAME; SPECIFYING A VISIT DATE, CONNECTED TO AN EXISTING EVENT; OR, IF SOMEHOW HELPFUL IN YOUR CONTEXT, PUSHING FOR THE VISIT TO OCCUR BY END OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR>.