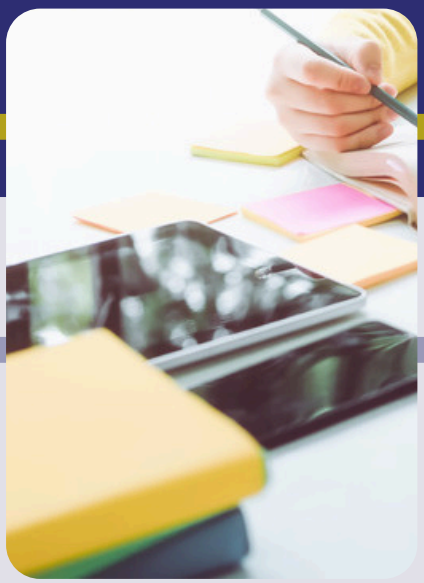
MAGNET SCHOOLS OF AMERICA

The Magnet School Advocates' **Playbook**

Making the Case for Magnet and Theme-based Schools











Introduction

Every day, magnet school educators see the impact of their work. Students discover new passions. Families find schools that meet their children's needs. Communities benefit from innovative public schools that prepare students for college, careers, and civic life.

Yet many policymakers and members of the public still don't fully understand what magnet schools are or why they matter.

Recent national public opinion research conducted by Voss Research & Strategy for Magnet Schools of America (MSA) offers encouraging news: Americans already value many of the things magnet schools provide. When people learn what magnet schools are and how they serve students, support grows significantly.

This "playbook" translates that research into practical messaging you can use in conversations with legislators, school board members, community leaders, families, and the media. Whether you're sharing your school's story, hosting a campus visit, or advocating for policies that support magnet schools, this guide will help you communicate with confidence and consistency.

You don't have to change people's values; rather, you have to connect magnet schools to the priorities they already share.

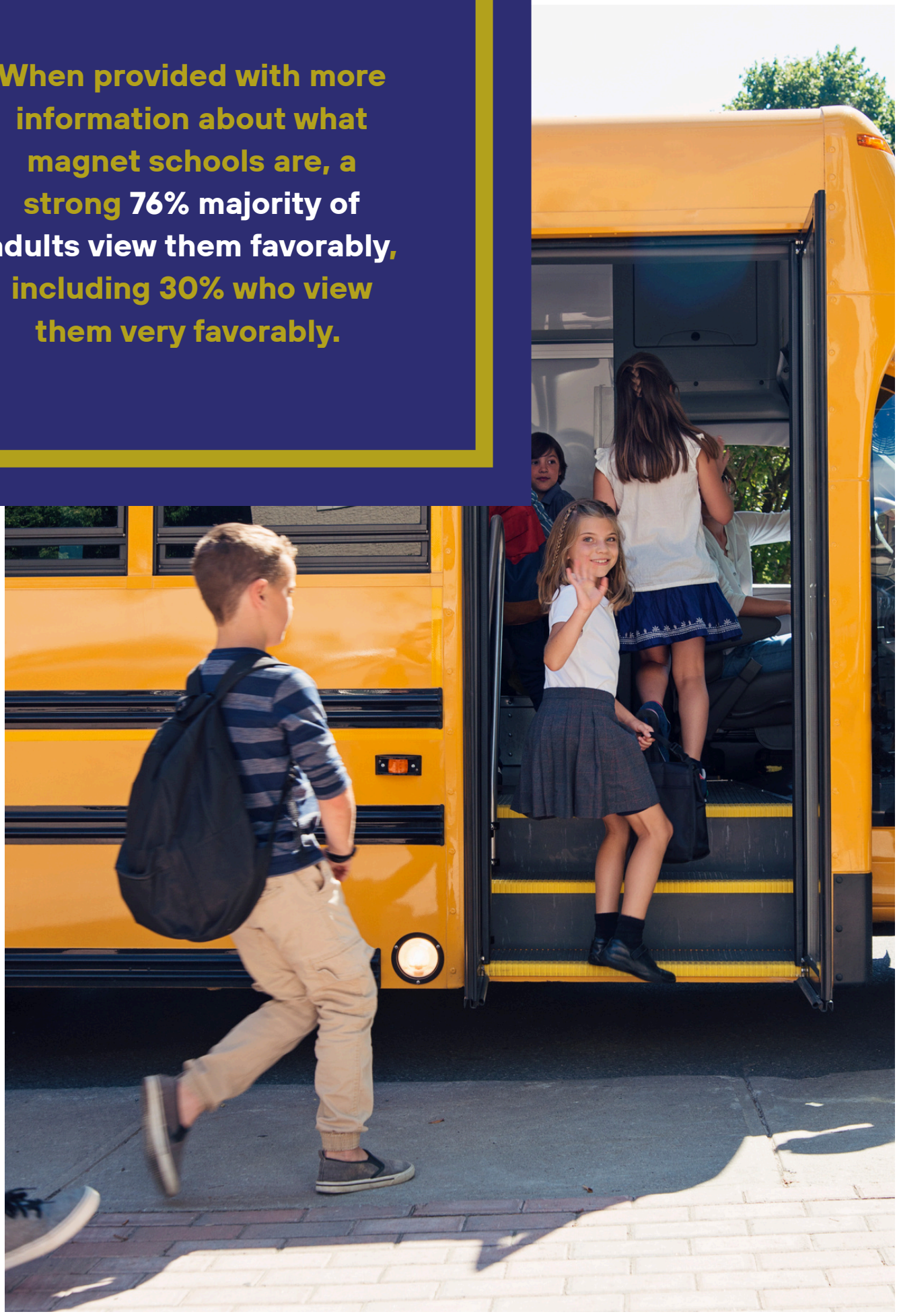
For more information about MSA's polling research informing this playbook:

Read the Report

Listen to the Podcast Episode

Read the *Distinct by Design* article

When provided with more information about what magnet schools are, a strong 76% majority of adults view them favorably, including 30% who view them very favorably.



What the **Polling** Tells Us

Americans broadly agree on what they want from public education, regardless of political affiliation. Magnet schools already deliver many of those priorities. The challenge for advocates is making that connection for policymakers and the public.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 **Americans value high-quality public schools.**
People consistently prioritize high-quality educational opportunities that prepare students for academic and future success.

2 **Families want more educational opportunities.**
Parents want access to public school options that reflect their children's interests, strengths, and goals.

3 **Specialized, theme-based learning experiences are broadly appealing.**
Specialized programs, hands-on learning, and real-world experiences are widely viewed as strengths in public education.

4 **Diversity is valued when connected to preparing students for success.**
People agree that a diverse learning environment helps prepare students for the workplaces and communities they will be in as adults.

5 **Support for magnet schools increases significantly once people understand them.**
One of the strongest findings from MSA's research: favorability of magnet schools increases dramatically after people learn their purpose and what they offer students based on their interests and experiences.

SUMMARY OF KEY SURVEY FINDINGS



38% → 76%

A majority of adults have either never heard of or have no opinion of magnet schools.

Thirty-eight (38) percent of adults view magnet schools favorably while 10 percent view them unfavorably. When provided with more information about what magnet schools are, a strong **76 percent majority** of adults view them favorably, including **30 percent** who view them very favorably. And favorability increases across demographics.



All demographics value the theme-based and public school aspects.

Fifty-eight (58) percent say it is extremely or very important that magnet schools offer students the option of focusing on a specific type of subject area, like science, math, or performing arts, and 57 percent say it is extremely or very important that magnet schools are publicly funded and open to the public.



Voters respond more favorably to diversity when framed as focused on future outcomes.

Focusing on the future generates stronger agreement for desegregation efforts than focusing on the present.

The **Advocacy** Opportunity

Successful advocacy starts with shared values, not policy debates, so begin with what people already care about:

- **Supporting** strong public schools
- **Expanding** educational options
- **Offering** specialized, personalized learning experiences
- **Preparing** students for future success

Then explain how magnet schools bring those values to life.

Remember: You don't have to convince people to care about great public schools. You need to show how magnet schools—high-quality public schools of choice—meet the values they already hold.

Key Message:

Magnet schools expand opportunity through innovative public school programs that prepare students for success while giving families meaningful educational choices.



The **Magnet School** Message

People already value what magnet schools offer. The challenge is connecting the dots between public education, school choice, academic excellence, and the magnet school model.

Message Pillars of the Magnet Model:



Innovation Within Public Schools

- Specialized theme
- Standards-based
- Hands-on learning
- College and career readiness

Opportunities for Families

- School choice
- Educational access
- Personalized learning
- Community partnerships

Excellence In School and Beyond

- Academic rigor
- Excellent teachers
- Strong outcomes
- Real-world preparation

Message **Thoughtfully**

You know your school and community best, so rather than avoid certain words or phrases, consider how to frame concepts in ways that connect with broader audiences. For example, if discussing diversity, emphasize how learning alongside peers with different backgrounds prepares students for college, careers, and civic life.

Instead of ...	Try ...	Example
Focusing on programs	Focus on student opportunities	Our magnet school helps **students**...
Leading with diversity	Lead with student outcomes	Our magnet school **prepares** students for the real world.
Using education jargon (e.g., school choice)	Use everyday language	Our magnet schools give parents **options**.
Talking about waitlists	Talk about innovation	Our magnet students have **opportunities** to...
Explaining magnet history	Explain why families choose them today	Magnet schools are **innovative** public schools of choice.

Sample Message:

Magnet schools offer parents and students the option of choosing a pathway with a specialized theme within their public school system. By attracting students from different backgrounds—like a magnet—they provide a learning environment that prepares students for the diverse workplaces and communities they will be in as adults.

Tell Your **Story**



The strongest advocacy connects the core messages—excellent public schools, meaningful educational options, and preparing students for the future—to your own magnet school. Now apply these messages to your local context and adapt them accordingly for conversations with legislators, families, community partners, and the media.

Personalize the Polling Insights

Start with the following prompts:

Our magnet school helps students ...
[Add your school's specific impact.]

Our students have opportunities to ...
[Add one or two distinctive programs or experiences.]

Families choose our school because ...
[Add what families value most.]

One student success story is...
[Add a brief, memorable example.]

Remember:

You don't need to explain everything about magnet schools. Lead with what matters to your audience and then tell your school's story.

Apply a Basic Storytelling Framework

Using a basic storytelling framework of problem definition, solution, and desired outcome, apply a challenge facing magnet schools.



Framework:

Problem	Solution	Impact
Public school districts across the country are facing declining student enrollment, impacting budgets and leading to tough decisions, like canceled programs, teacher layoffs, and even school closures.	Instead of closing schools, districts should focus on understanding what families want and redesign under-enrolled schools into magnet schools that can recapture students and families.	Districts **invest strategically** in high-demand magnet programs that attract families back to the public school system.

Example:

Problem: Declining enrollment
Solution: Magnet school solution
Impact: School redesigned to meet families' needs

Sample Story

Public school districts across the country are facing a declining student enrollment crisis. When districts lose students, they lose revenue, and many districts have responded by reducing staff, freezing hiring, consolidating campuses, or even closing schools.

But closing schools should not be the default response. Districts should instead focus on understanding what families want and redesign under-enrolled schools to be responsive to that demand. Magnet schools and other high-quality public school options can help districts retain families, attract new students, and strengthen schools that might otherwise face closure.

Families aren't just leaving public schools; they're making choices. Districts that offer high-demand programs—such as STEM, dual-language immersion, arts, early college, or project-based learning—are often better positioned to attract and retain students and families. Well-planned magnet schools that offer this specialized programming can draw students from across the district or back into it.

The saying about "spending money to make money" holds some truth in public education. Districts cannot focus exclusively on cutting costs. They must invest strategically in programs that attract families back to public schools. Understanding what families want and redesigning under-enrolled schools into in-demand magnet schools or programs is one strategy to recapture students and families.

For more information about magnet schools as a strategy for declining enrollment:



Read the ***When Enrollment Drops*** brief





Watch the ***webinar*** recording

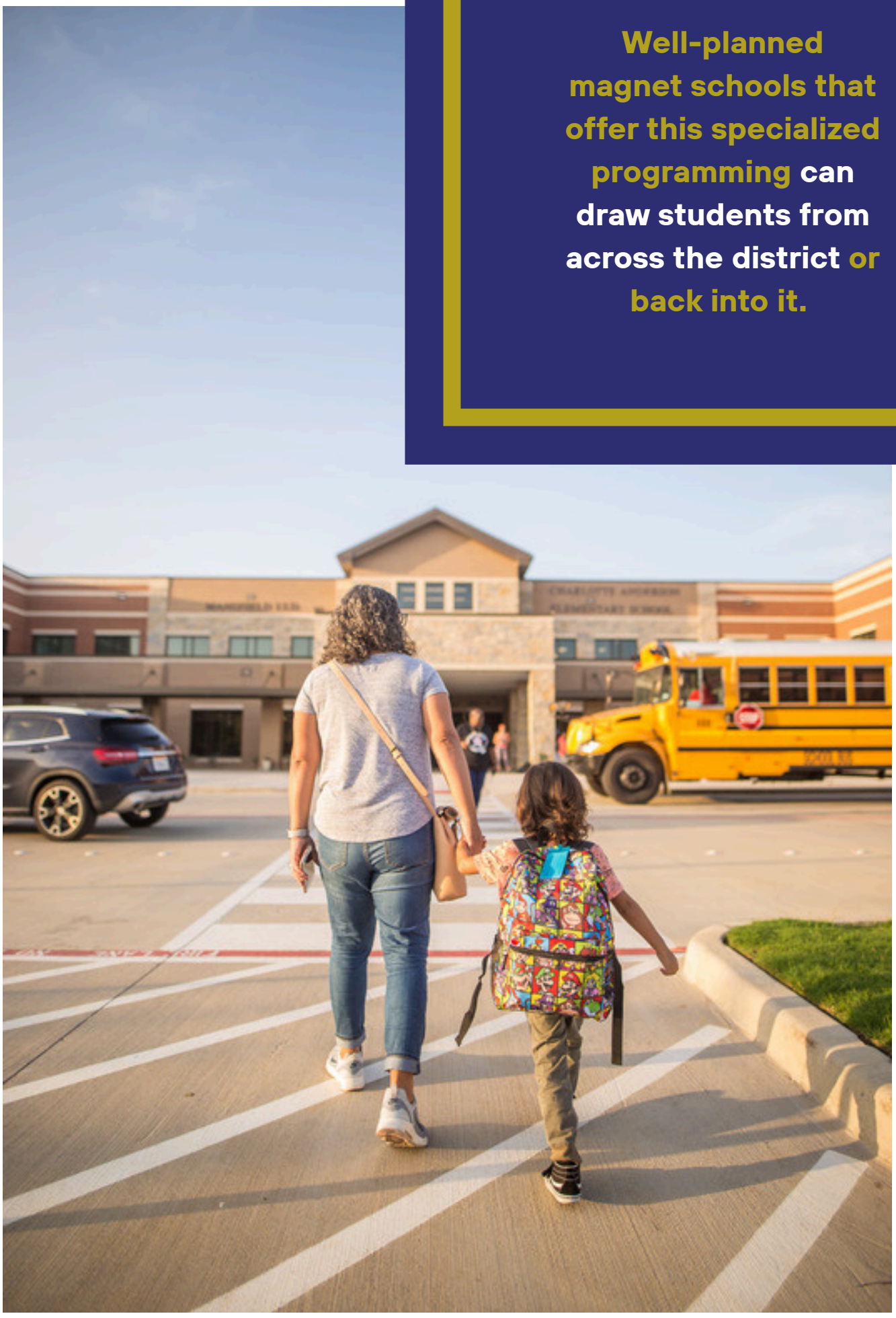




Read the ***Distinct by Design*** article



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Take **Action**

It's time to make your voice heard. When talking with policymakers, community leaders, families, or the media, focus on what makes your magnet school valuable to students and families, and connect your story to what people already want from public education.

Start With the Big Picture

Magnet schools are innovative public schools of choice. They give students and families opportunities to pursue specialized programs and learning experiences within their public school system.

Magnet schools can offer:

- **Specialized themes** such as STEM, the arts, world languages, CTE, and more
- Hands-on, project-based, and **real-world learning**
- **Strong academic** and college- and career-focused programs
- Opportunities for students to **learn alongside peers** from different backgrounds
- **Partnerships with families,** businesses, colleges, and community organizations

Keep in Mind What Americans Want from Public Schools

MSA's national public opinion research found that Americans broadly value:

✓ **High-quality public schools**
People want schools that prepare students for future success.

✓ **More educational opportunities**
Families value having options that reflect students' interests, strengths, and goals.

✓ **Innovation**
Specialized programs, hands-on learning, and real-world experiences are appealing to a broad audience.

✓ **Preparation for the future**
People see value in students learning alongside peers with different backgrounds and preparing for diverse workplaces and communities.

✓ **The Key Takeaway:** Support for magnet schools increases significantly when people understand what magnet schools are and what they offer.

Making the Case for Magnet Schools: Three Practical Steps



Invite an elected official to visit your school.

SITE VISIT GUIDE



Share your magnet story on social media.

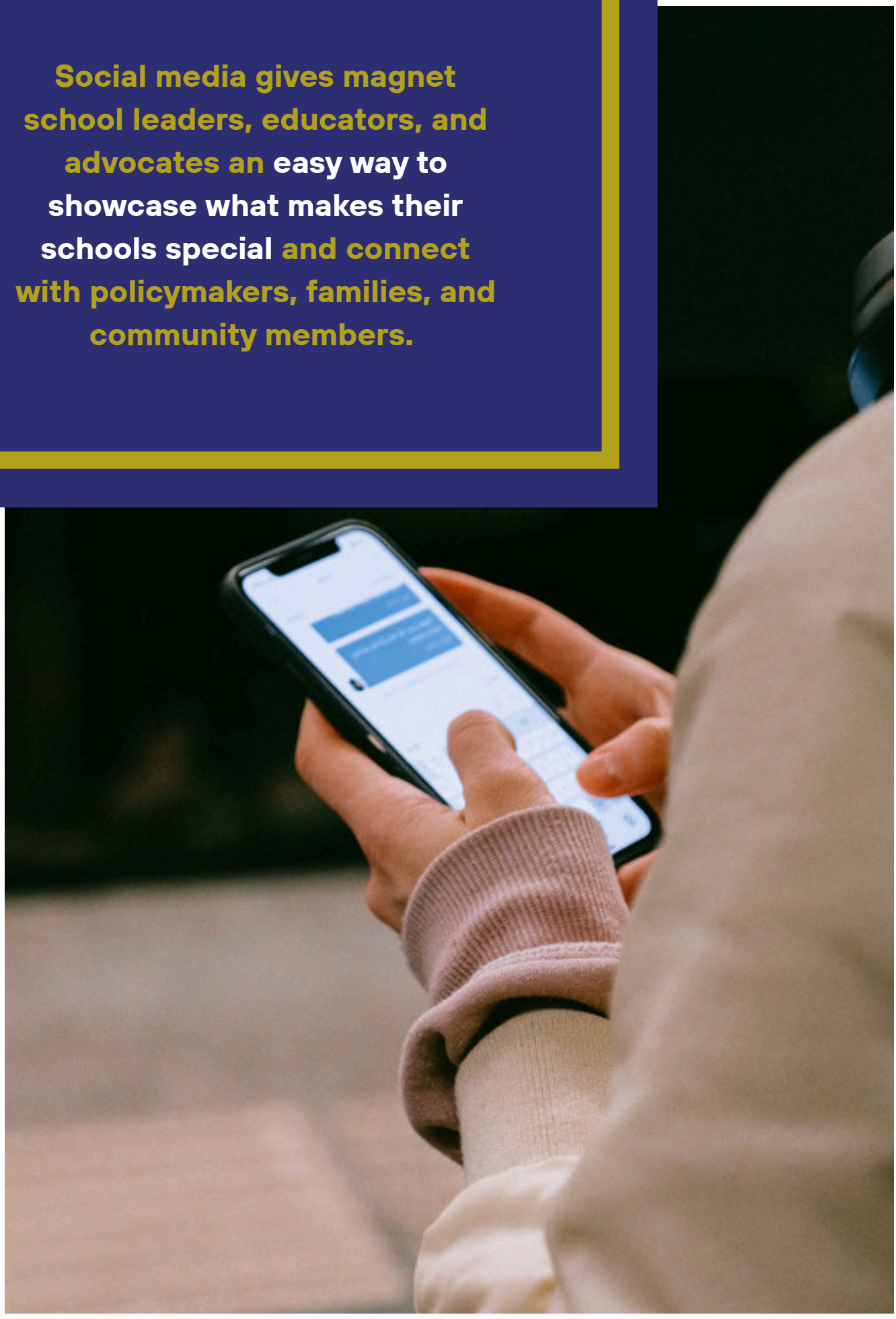
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT



Connect with advocacy and communications.

CONNECT WITH US

Social media gives magnet school leaders, educators, and advocates an easy way to showcase what makes their schools special and connect with policymakers, families, and community members.



MAGNET SCHOOLS OF AMERICA







