

Recommendation #3



Tell an aspirational story about community schools using specific, concrete examples.

Storytelling can take on many forms and increasingly social change communicators need to share their work in more creative ways. Videos or documentary shorts are one method. We can frame our stories no matter the form of the story or the platform we use to tell it.

The story of Oakland International High School, (which won the Community School Excellence Award in 2017), illustrates the recommendation to tell an aspirational story about community schools using specific, concrete examples.



Oakland International High School: 2017 Community School Awardee: Profile

Oakland International High School educates newly arrived immigrants and refugees as part of the Oakland Unified School District. As a community school, they provide resources throughout the community to support students and families.

<https://futureforlearning.org/media/community-schools-oakland/>

0:00-0:10

Opens with singing, smiling people, lighthearted music, and shows the outside of a traditional school setting. These are all ways to tell an aspirational story. The music and visuals connote something positive and hopeful. The opening scene also counters the model that school, or learning can only happen in a classroom.

Main Themes

This video consistently foregrounds solutions rather than focusing on the problem the school and its staff are trying to solve for.

The film features multiple voices and perspectives, from current and former students; teachers and school staff; community members and volunteers. Each perspective gives the viewer another vantage point into how community schools work.

0:33–0:59

Community schools may be a new concept to most people. That is why it is important to help people you interview in your documentary explain key concepts and ideas. You cannot dictate what interviewees will say, but think about the questions you may ask that will allow for them to explain parts of the system.

1:17–1:30

The subject provides further explanation and context for the solution (community schools), rather than simply naming the problem (e.g. students lack access to certain key resources).

1:30–2:12

Here the filmmaker provides an example of what a community partnership looks like. This strategy invites another voice and perspective. The interviewee explains the program and why it works, the needs that it addresses for the student, and further explains how learning continues to happen outside of school.

Explanation and examples are common and useful frame elements, both of which are used throughout the video.

The story gives a clear, concise summary of what a community school is, how it works, and why it works. The video shows that positive change is possible. “Oakland International High School: 2017 Community School Awardee” creates a hopeful model for an updated public education system.

Tip

Remember that sound and visuals are framing choices as well and can help further advance the story you wish to tell.

Tip

When you are outlining your story and drafting your interview questions, look back at the “Models of Thinking Map.” Use this map to anticipate people’s assumptions and to craft questions to address parts of the story that they may not be aware of or understand.