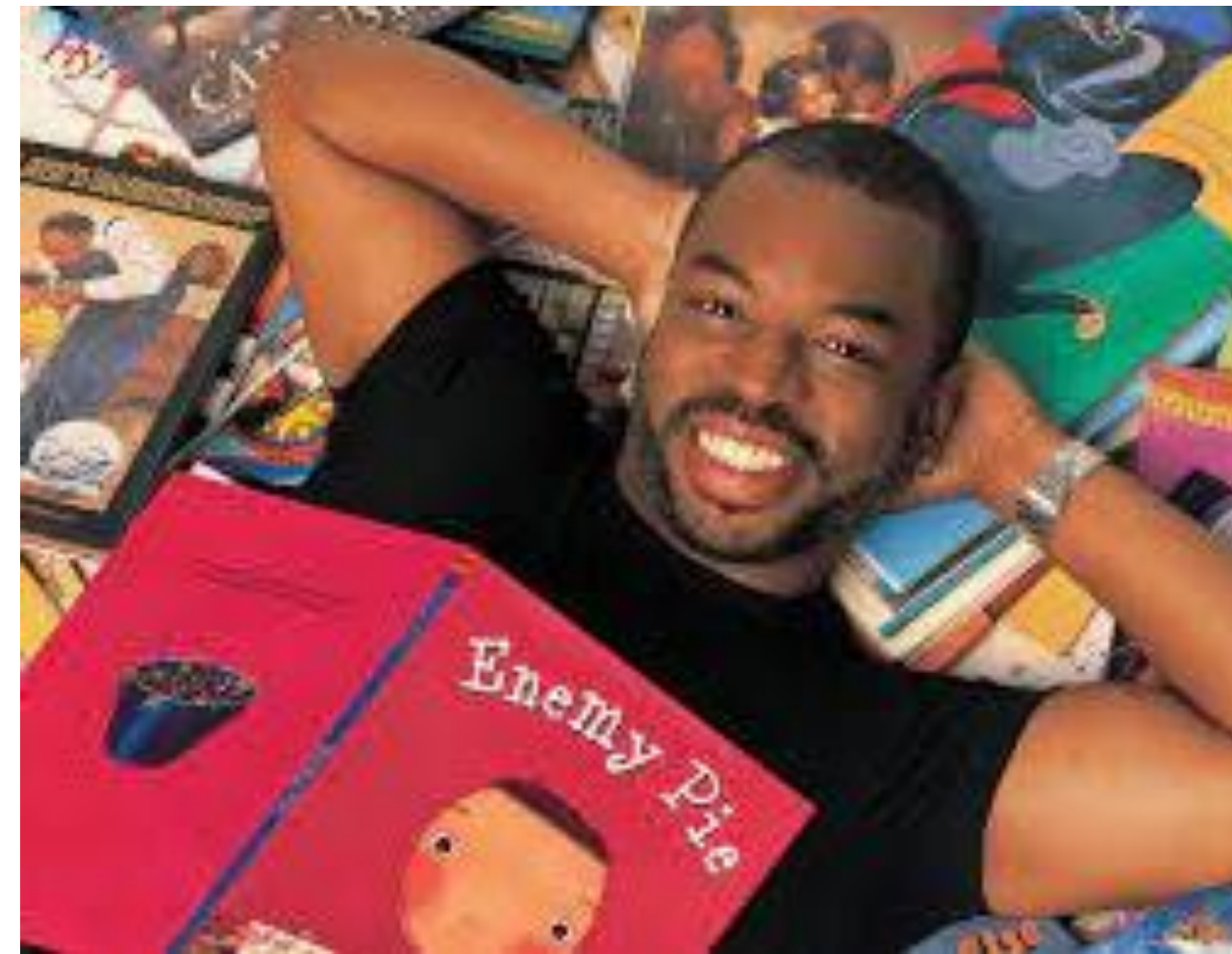


# Mastering the Media

*With  
Chantal Lovell Fennell*







“We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.”

–Jonathan Gottschall,  
*The Storytelling Animal*



# Remember who you're talking to.

If you try to reach everyone,  
you probably will reach no  
one.





# What's your headline?

- Articles are out. **Headlines are in.**
- You have **less than 26 seconds!**





# Core communication tips

- Be **CONCISE**
- Be **CLEAR**
- Be **COMPELLING**
- Be **CANDID**
- Be **COMFORTABLE**







The best way to be boring is to leave nothing out.

- *Voltaire*





# Telling your story to the media

- Reporters want a **STORY**.
- Reporters are just like you and me.





# KEY MESSAGE

## ISSUES

Key Message

## PROOF-POINTS

Fact/Statistic

Example/Anecdote





# Remember

- **You are the expert** of your story
- Reporters need you
- **Boil down your message.** Be able to say why your story matters to that reporter's audience.
- Reporters are just people.
- There's no such thing as off the record.
- Get **comfortable with silence**



# Video interviews

- Forget about the camera
- Avoid busy prints/clothing
- Practice your pleasant face
- Be well-lit
- Breathe
- Keep your feet planted on the floor







# Radio interviews

- Remember, no one can see you!
- Use notes, but don't read
- Stand up
- Pamper your voice
- Listen
- Make sure you have a good connection.



# Print interviews

- Schedule ahead; have a time length (less usually more)
- Ask questions ahead of time to understand purpose and format
- Use notes but don't read
- Stop talking







# At the Statehouse

- Be prepared each day
- Know your top talking point/headline
- Pause, gather yourself.
- Offer a follow-up.
- Staff can help move you along, but there's a cost to that too.



# Verbal flagging

- “What’s new about this is ...”
- “Here’s what is most important ...”
- “The bottom line is ...”



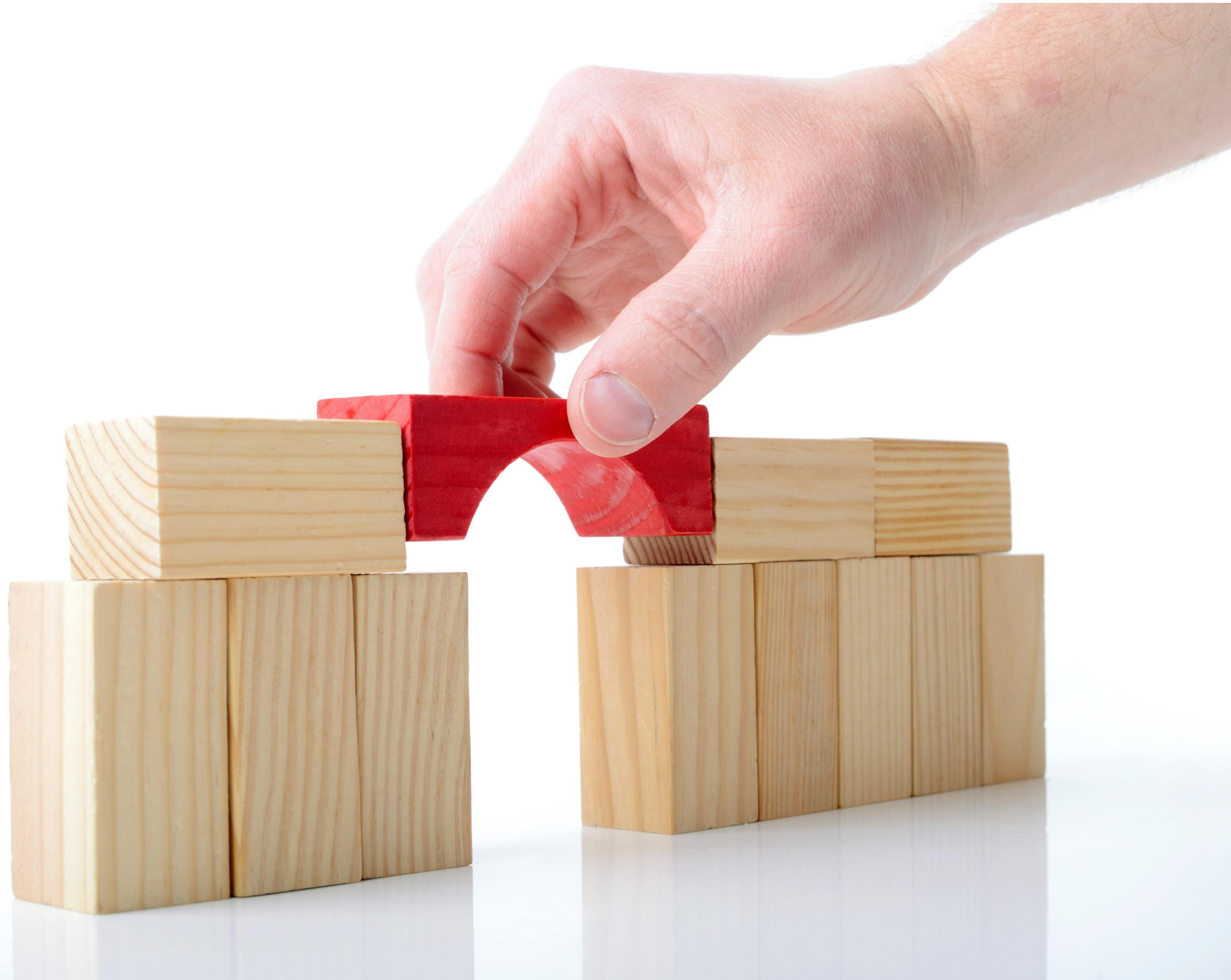




# Block and bridge

- Acknowledge the question or statement (but don't say, "That's a great question!")
- Smoothly transition
- Build a bridge back to your core message





- “Thank you for bringing that up, however, it’s also important to emphasize ...”
- That is an important point, and it also speaks to a bigger issue, which is ...”
- “That’s one way to think about it. Another way is ...”
- “That’s not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is ...”



# Words that don't work with reporters

## BIASED

Try: "All we want is a fair chance to present our view."

## SENSATIONAL

Try: "The more compelling story is about equality, not controversy."

## FAKE

Try: "Accuracy is critical to resolving any public policy debate."

## LAZY

Try: "We know it takes a lot of work to really understand both sides."

## COMBATIVE

Try: "With so much at stake, we all need the media to objectively explain both points of view."



# Media traps ... and how to escape



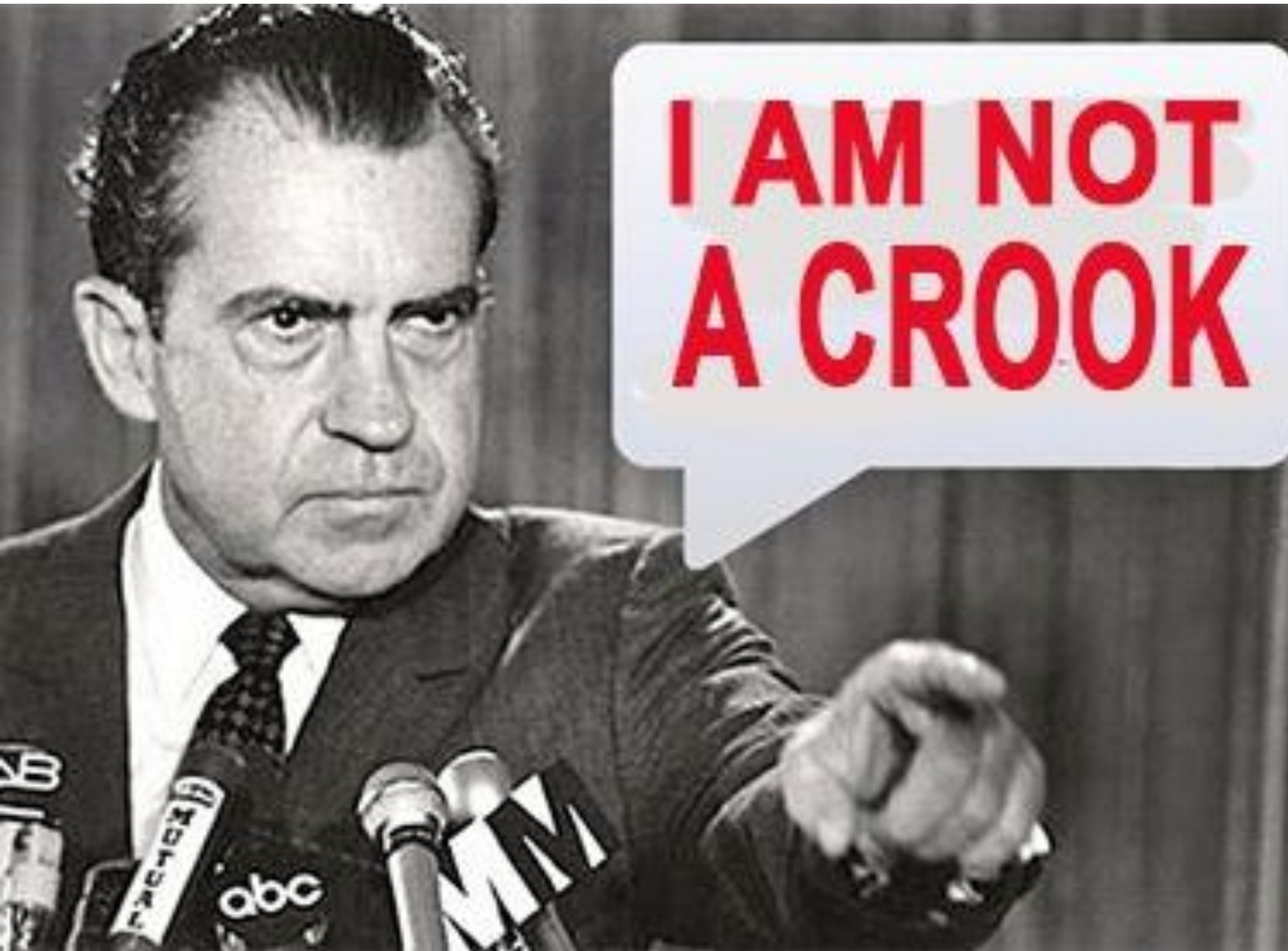


# When you don't know the answer

- Don't panic
- Pause
- Be honest
- Pivot back to what you do know







# If things go south

- Never repeat an accusation
- Instead, acknowledge and replace.
- “That’s not the case. What we know is ...”
- “Here’s how we see it ...”
- “Not at all.”
- “What’s accurate is ...”



# Maintain guardrails

- **Don't speculate.** "I'm reluctant to speculate. What I can say is ..."
- **Reject assumptions.** "I can't accept that assumption. What we know is ..."
- **Don't fall for the phantom attribution.** Instead, say, "That's a common misconception. ..."





Insert interview clip





# Writing op-eds

- 600-800 words
- Intro
- Share your story
- What you want to see happen, the solution
- Conclusion





# Pitching op-eds

- Many news sites list submission guidelines on their websites- follow them.
- Be able to state in 1 sentence who you are and why the op-ed is important to readers
- Follow up



# How to talk about educational choice

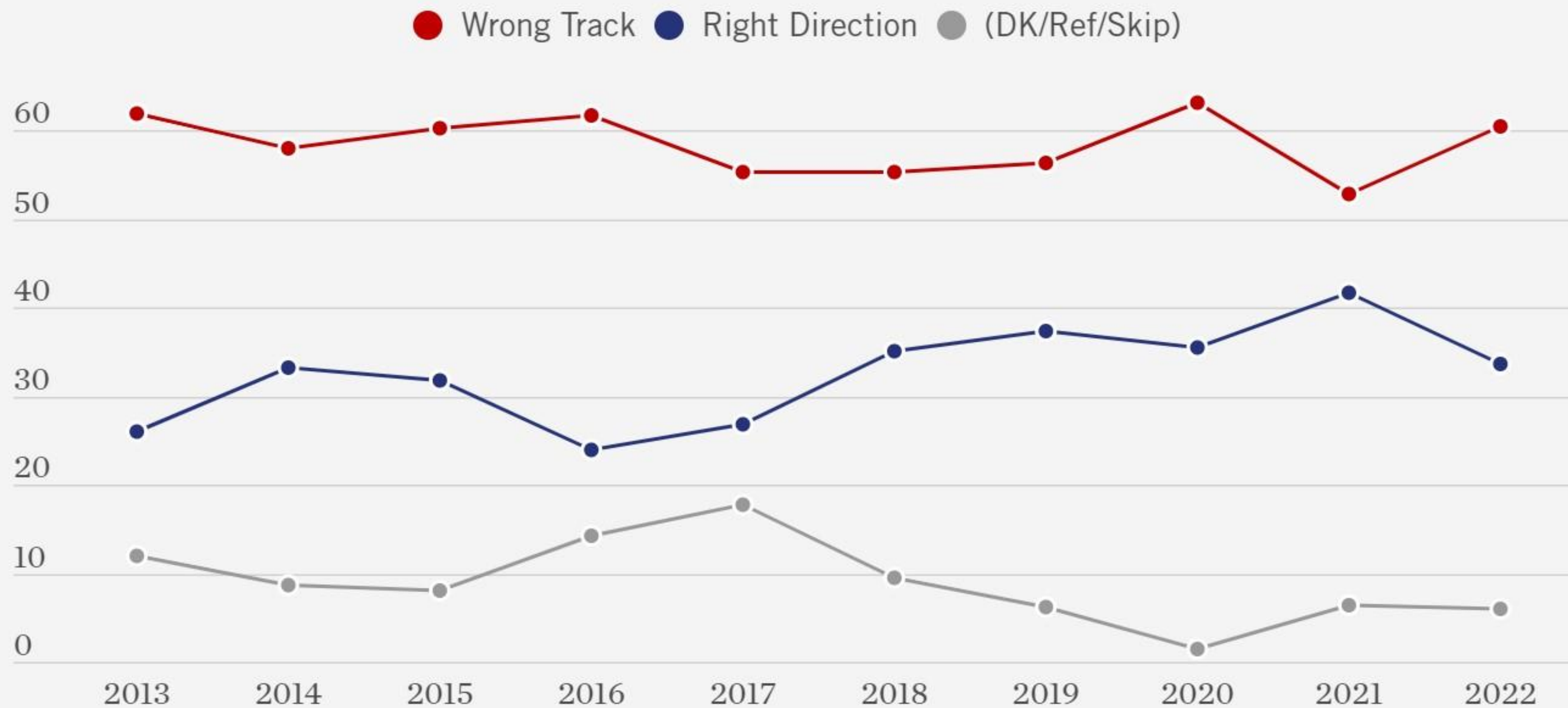




# PUBLIC ON DIRECTION OF K-12 EDUCATION

About one out of three Americans believe K-12 education is heading in the right direction—an 8-point decline since 2021.

*% of General Population*





# Do Americans support school choice policies?

ESAs

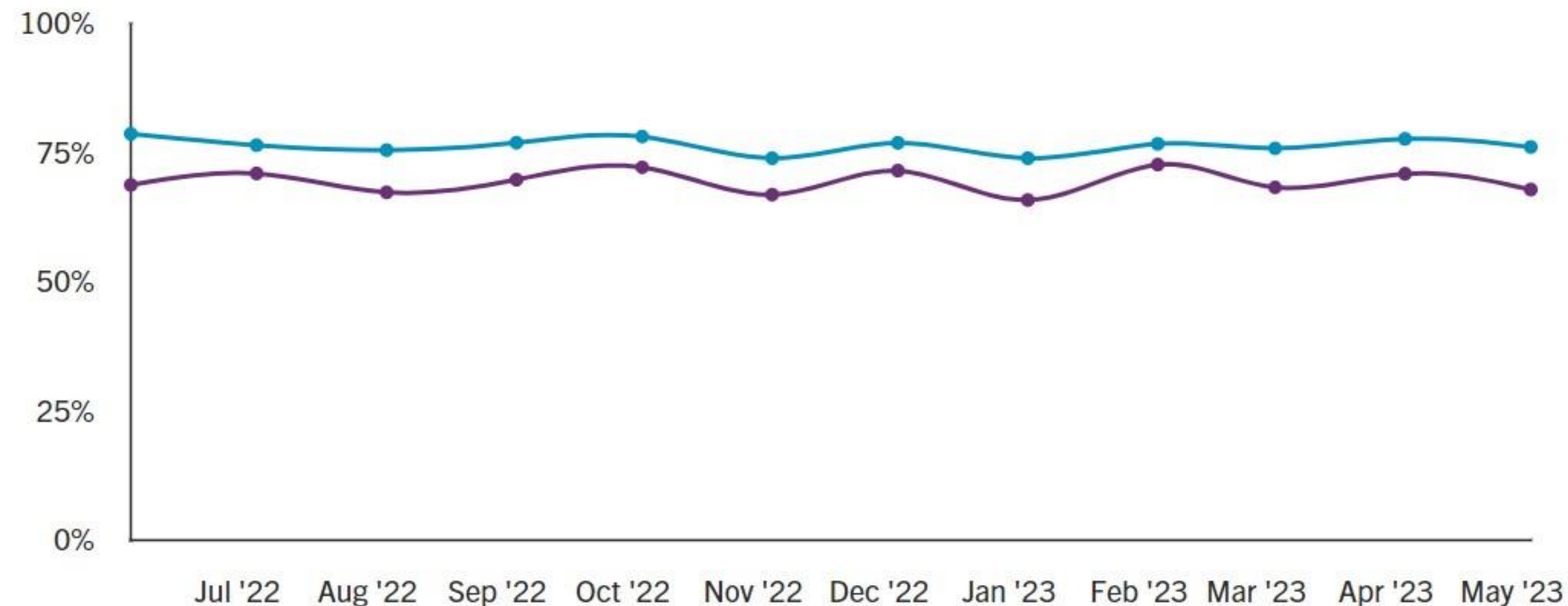
School Vouchers

Charter Schools

An "education savings account" in K–12 education – often called an ESA – establishes for parents a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes. Parents can then use these funds to pay for: school tuition; tutoring; online education programs; therapies for students with special needs; textbooks or other instructional materials; or save for future college expenses.

All Adults School Parents

% Total Support (Strongly Support + Somewhat Support)

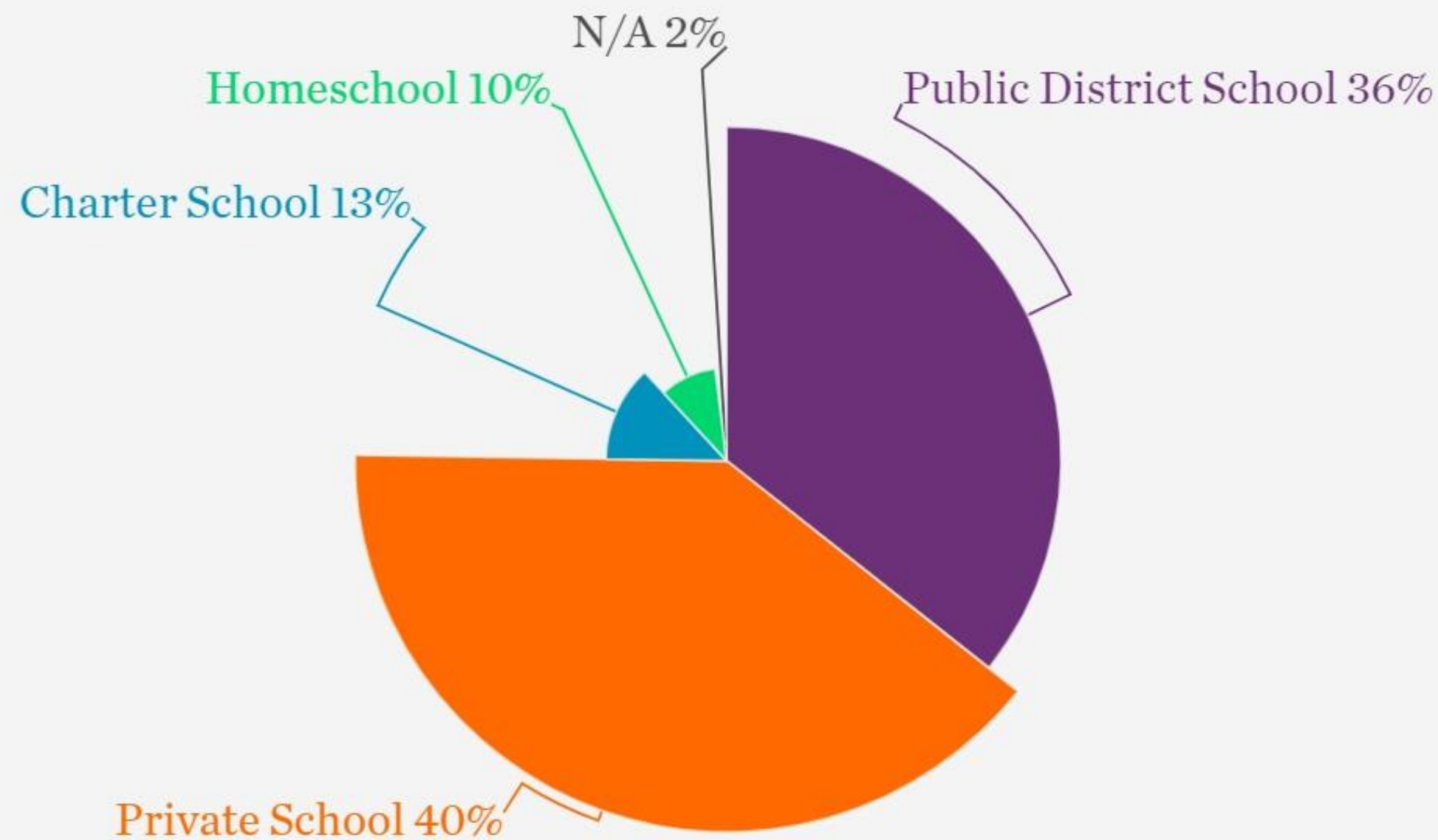




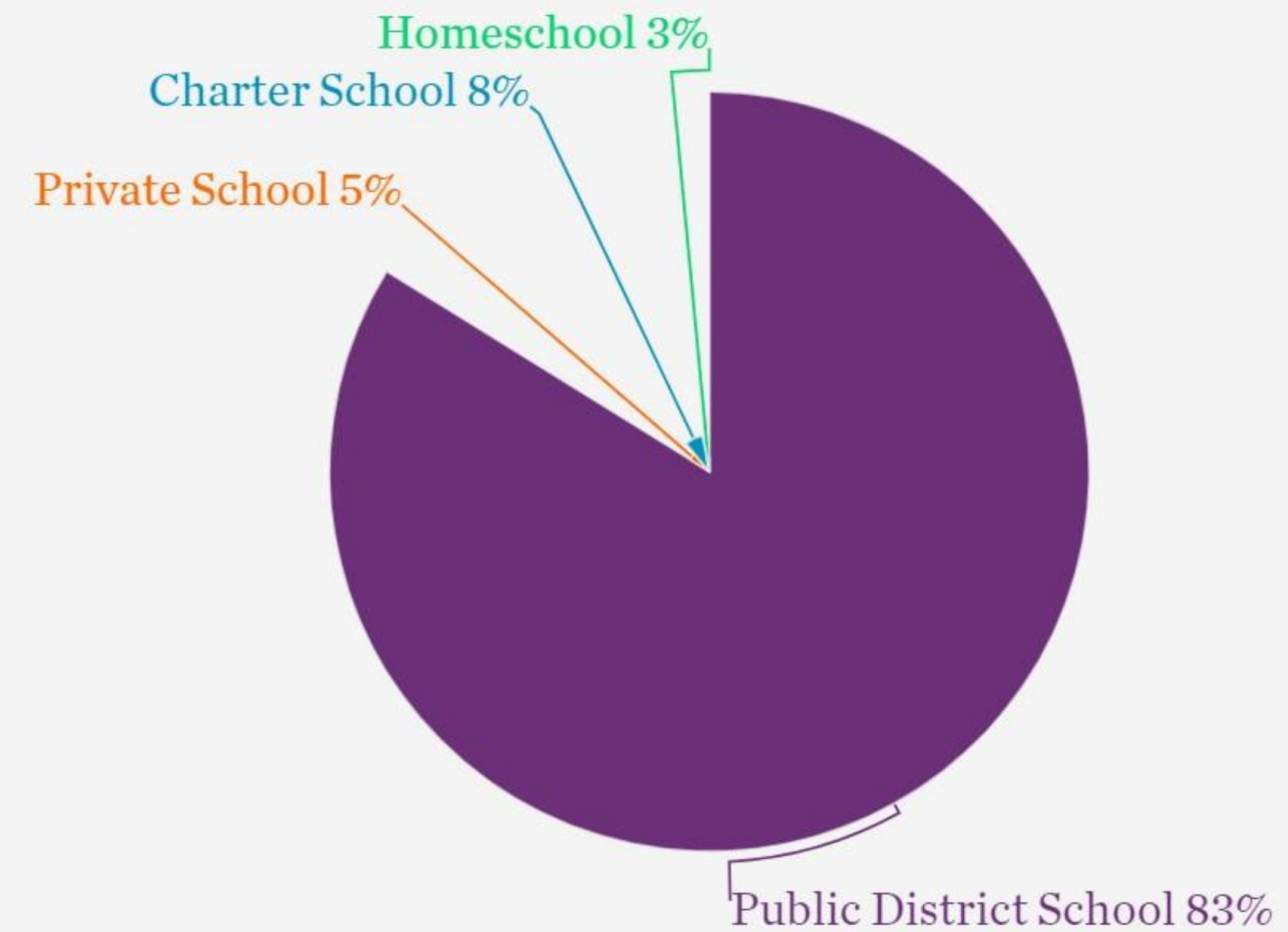
# Parents' Schooling Preferences vs. Actual Enrollment

Where parents *want* to send their kids to school and where they *actually* send their kids to school don't match up.

## Preferences



## Actual Enrollment





NEWS

## As Rural Republicans Derail School Vouchers in Texas, Gov. Abbott Vows a Special Legislative Session For His Top Education Priority

With many rural legislators remaining skeptical of private school vouchers to the Lone Star State fails —

EDUCATION ELECTION 2024 GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

### 'Not in Nebraska': Public school advocates rally against 'opportunity scholarship' bill

If passed, opponents vow to repeal the proposal by a vote of the people

BY: ZACH WENDLING - APRIL 29, 2023 4:53 PM



NEWS > LOCAL NEWS



### Kansas Republicans struggle to pass school choice plan



# So why haven't more states enacted educational choice programs?





OUR STUDENTS ARE WORTH IT!  
INVEST IN OUR FUTURE!

Fund Education Properly!

Teachers like they care for your child.  


This is lesson #1? How quickly will you learn?

20% RAISE... Can we be your FRIENDS?

#RedForEd  
\* Our kids deserve Better!  
\* Better pay will keep and attract highly Effective Teachers!

0% Raise

#RedFor2

ED ARE

because  
It!  
I AM the FUTURE!  
#REDFORED

ARIZONA EDUCATORS UNITED #REDFORED

ARIZONA EDUCATORS UNITED #REDFORED

All teachers left BEHIND!  
#raisesnotlies

The Future of Arizona is in my Classroom

#REDforED

TEACHERS  
#REDforED



# The Congressional Effect

We told people their schools were terrible, but that didn't win us any supporters.





# So how do we change this?

- Focus on the why.
- Understand our audience.
- Find common ground.
- Relate.









# Words that work







# OPPORTUNITY

**Not competition**



# ASSIGNED SCHOOLS

Not government schools







# EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

**Not school choice**



# SCHOOLING, LEARNING, EDUCATION

Not schools







# LOW-INCOME

Not poor



# NOT MEETING NEEDS

Instead of failing







# PRO-TEACHER

**Not anti-union**



# FAMILY, PARENT EMPOWERMENT







# INDIVIDUALIZED, CUSTOMIZED

Not one-size-fits-all





**What's the  
biggest asset  
we can deploy  
in this  
conversation?**





**What  
questions  
do you  
have?**



# Thanks!

