SUMMARY

Laura Jeffrey Academy (LJA) is a STEM-focused, tuition-free public charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota. Established in 2008, their inclusive, culturally diverse learning environment is open to all middle school students in grades 5-8.

By partnering with CEL Marketing PR Design, LJA seized the opportunity to refine key messaging, refresh branding, and increase visibility with integrated digital marketing, which increased enrollment growth by 25% year over year.

DEFINING THE BRAND

LJA excels at building relationships and inspiring girls to embrace STEM fields during the critical middle years. Yet they were struggling to find and attract families who embraced their mission. Emerging from the pandemic with an enrollment drop, school leaders want to redefine the school brand.

A creative, progressive and feminist-forward school, marketing it as a “girls school” too often attracted families who sought to shelter their daughters instead of empowering them. The school had evolved since it was founded for girls. Today, enrollment is open to all grade 5-8 scholars, with a focus on creating an inclusive and affirming community that welcomes LGBTQ+ pre-teens.

Working collaboratively with the educational team and the board, CEL Marketing PR Design conducted student-focused research, developed and tested new key messages, performed focus groups with students and staff, and rebranded the school to capture the essence of an LJA Scholar. We removed gendered language, modernized school differentiators, and embraced a quirky, uplifting tonality that scholars and families appreciated.

Brand Material Examples

- Flyer/Fact Sheet
- Digital Ads
- Open Enrollment Banner
- Downloadable Parent Packet
- New Student Enrollment Certificate
- Postcard

YOUR FUTURE IS LOADING.
Let LJA be your launchpad to success!
DEFINING THE BRAND

New Taglines
• Think. Dream. Do.
• Sparks Fly, Stars Shine.
• Your future is loading. Let LJA be your launch pad to success.

New Key Messages:
• Empowering STEM Scholars to be creators, thinkers and problem solvers in a collaborative school environment.
• LJA’s mission is to develop scholars with big hearts, bright futures and the ability to think critically. Students are encouraged to explore their potential, discover their brilliance and develop their intellect.
• This is where sparks fly and stars shine. [poem]

The design team channeled their inner tweens to create vibrant templates incorporating science elements with notebook doodles — the perfect blend for a STEM-based school serving middle schoolers in grades 5-8.

• Focus groups with scholars and staff to refine important messages, colors, and brand assets that match the unique, diverse, and inclusive school experience at LJA
• Refined the school’s “burst” logo to make the details more crisp
  • Originally designed as a dandelion, the logo was refined and recolored to match the LJA brand, giving off the perception of a science or atom-like graphic
• Developed a bright, fun color palette
• Matched a set of consistent fonts
• Created templates for consistency in branding
ONLINE BRAND PRESENCE

LJA’s enrollment marketing depends heavily on being found when families are searching for school options at odd transition periods (fourth grade entering fifth). With a small student body, they could not rely on word-of-mouth referrals. A strong SEO and digital marketing strategy was needed to elevate their digital presence. How they appear online is a critical element of their branding strategy—LJA draws from a large geographic area, and reaching families is essential.

With a focus on awareness and lead nurturing, the team developed an integrated marketing plan:

- SEO-rich website content and a target keyword strategy
- Build brand authority through Google, Bing and website content
- Improve website layout, design and navigation
- Updated website content, including staff bios, FAQs, enrollment process pages, and blog posts
- Create branded social media templates
- Direct mail to families in LJA’s immediate geographical area
- Create a series of digital enrollment materials
- Branded events like “Science Saturday” and “Bring a Friend to School Day” were successful and resulted in new student enrollments (10 of 17 families who RSVP’d to the first Science Saturday enrolled at least one child in LJA for the following school year).
- Share consistent social media posts highlighting scholars, staff and school life
- Brand a new school hashtag — #LJArocks
- Marketing downloadable packets and other gated content for prospective families to download after sharing their email address
- Created swag to enhance the prospect and enrollment experience: stickers, enrollment certificates, pencils, stress balls, coloring posters
- Exterior signage for enrollment and school awareness
- Ambassador program for interested parents to help spread awareness and reach prospective families during open enrollment—includes curated messages, social media posts, graphics, and shareable blog posts

These changes resulted in more views on LJA’s website and social media platforms, where engagement and reach nearly doubled, resulting in more school tours and information requests. Within 6 months, seven of the target search phrases appeared on page 1 of Google, and there was an increase of 1,105 ranking positions for all keywords on Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Total organic traffic increased by 116% year-over-year due to an increase in organic ranking/positions. Most importantly: enrollment is growing. LJA enrollment rose 30% in 2022 over 2021.
SEARCH RANKINGS

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**IMPROVED WEBSITE LAYOUT AND REDESIGN** [link to website here]
ENROLLING GRADES 5-8

LAURA JEFFREY ACADEMY

SOCIAL MEDIA TEMPLATES [link here]

ENROLLMENT MATERIALS [link here]

DOWNLOADABLE PACKETS [link here]