

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

Department Of Public Affairs

"To inform, involve and connect all school system stakeholders to ensure maximum student achievement and system productivity."

WHY DO OUR SCHOOLS NEED A MARKETING PLAN?

Public schools have historically not viewed marketing their product as an essential, or even appropriate, function. Yet planned or not, each school does present an image through its most important marketing agents – its staff and students. A marketing plan is simply a coordinated system for sending the messages we want about our school and utilizing those agents to share the best that there is about our school.

At dismissal time each day, every school sends out hundreds of publicity agents in the persons of our students. If staff members recognize the potential of these agents for disseminating information, they soon realize that they can affect the messages students are carrying out of the building, and can design curriculum-related activities that utilize these skills.

More than anything, a marketing plan is a systematic way of changing the self-images of staff members to view themselves as agents who carry messages about the school. They transmit these messages in their actions at school with students and adults, and their actions in the school community.

Once you have decided that you do indeed want to share the best of your school with external audiences, this manual will guide you in developing your schools unique marketing plan. This is a program designed to assist the principal and the school staff in communicating school successes to a diverse public and to help build community involvement, community support and community pride in our schools.

This marketing plan has been tested. Results are conclusive – it works! We encourage you to take the lead and plan now for the implementation of "Promoting Your School."

We believe that you will find the process of developing a marketing plan to be a positive experience in itself. You will learn more about your school, staff and community; the process will be a team building activity for your staff. We wish you success as you join your colleagues across the county in marketing our fine public schools.

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MARKETING STRATEGIES

There are five types of external marketing channels. They use different tools and vary in the amount of control you have over the messages and in the cost of sending those messages.

A. ADVERTISING

Advertising is the purchased message. You tell your markets why they should "buy" your product. You have a high amount of control over the messages, but the cost also may be high.

Advertising vehicles include:

- Radio
- Billboards
- Television
- Posters
- Newspapers
- Buttons
- Magazines
- Bumper Stickers
- Brochures
- Direct Mail
- Fliers

B. PROMOTION

Promotion is the traded message. You sell your school by using products furnished by a sponsor who also is benefiting from the promotion. (Example: A neighborhood pizza place underwrites the cost of paper place mats that carry a message about the school. The restaurant uses the place mats and the school's students are eager to take their families there to see the place mats.)

In promotion, your control of the message is still high, but the cost is low because it is absorbed by the sponsor. It is important, however, that the sponsors can see what the benefit to them is, whether it is increasing their sales (listeners, audience, etc.), securing a tax deduction, or creating a positive image for themselves in the community.

C. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations is the corporate message: a planned effort to influence your market through socially acceptable, responsible performance. Public Relations is the reputation your school builds through its ongoing programs.

Your school can enhance its reputation by sponsoring youth organizations, sponsoring events, providing a speaker bureau, and donating services and facilities. The cost of Public Relations is low, but the control of the message sent is also low.

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WHO WILL CREATE THE MARKETING PLAN?

Some of the success of your marketing plan will depend on staff commitment to its implementation, and that is best assured by giving staff members a sense of ownership.

We recommend that you inform a planning team of no more than seven individuals who will work through this manual cooperatively. It is recommended that this team include an administrator or designee; a teacher; a non-instructional employee; a member from the Advisory Council and/ or PTA (could be a dual role) and a Business Partnership representative (Civic Club, Chamber, Industry Council). This group may be a committee or task force appointed especially for this task, or a currently existing group in your school, such as your School Advisory Council, may perform the task. You will have to determine which approach is best, based on the leadership model utilized in your school. Remember to include non-certified personnel in your team.

List the planning group members below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Site Contact

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STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

Your school's strengths and needs are both important in your marketing plan. Strengths are the blocks upon which you can build. They will help you to sell your school.

Needs must be identified so that you can minimize their power to generate negative publicity and so that you can use them as a source of goals for school improvement.

EXEMPLARY CHARACTERISTICS

Example: Many of our teachers are certified in elementary education and special education.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

FUTURE NEEDS

Example: Plan for security of the building for students and staff.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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IDENTIFYING YOUR SCHOOL'S MARKET

Whom do you want to reach with your marketing plan? There are many groups that have the potential for being a positive force in the operation of your school, and they are the people whom you wish to address. Some market groups are large; some are small and specific. Here are some examples of audiences whom you may wish to reach:

- The parents and guardians of your school's students
- Parents of future students living in your school's attendance area.
- Citizens in your community - active volunteer organizations.
- Leaders in your community (business owners and managers; county/city political leaders; members of community advisory councils; leaders of civic organizations; church leaders)
- Leaders in educational organization, innovation, and decision-making (state legislators; State Department of Education employees; school board members; education associations; professors in education departments of area colleges)

Thinking of both current market groups and new potential markets, list additional markets that could be targeted:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

From the above lists, select at least three specific markets that you most wish to reach:

Market #1:

Market #2:

Market #3:

Fill in these markets' names next to their numbers on the following two pages.

As your work with the markets throughout this plan, remember that you are speaking not to an amorphous group "somewhere out there," but to specific identifiable people. We recommend that you set up "membership" lists for all markets that you have identified above. These lists should be done in accordance with your school's record-keeping system, whether it is computerized, index cards, or another system. You will find these lists useful for mailing, phone calls, and planning activities.

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CREATING MESSAGES FOR YOUR MARKETS

Now that you have identified and described your markets, you are prepared to select the messages you wish to send to each group. These messages may be different for each market. When possible, create a benefit message (letting the audience know what the school can do for them.)

List several messages for each of your markets:

Example:

*You have a valuable contribution to make to our school.
What you do in your work affects us.*

MARKET #1: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

MARKET #2: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

MARKET #3: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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DEVELOPING YOUR RESOURCES

You will need to develop and utilize both financial and human resources in carrying out your marketing plan, but an effective marketing plan DOES NOT REQUIRE A LARGE BUDGET!

Suggested resources include:

- School Improvement (Lottery) Monies
- Contributions from partners in Education
- Grants (Government, Special Programs, etc.)
- Education Foundation Mini Grants
- Donations
- Funding Sources for Project / Advertising

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TEN TIPS FOR WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

1. **Do not . . . unless you have something newsworthy to report.** If what you send consistently is inappropriate, you will develop a reputation and your material will be thrown away as soon as the return address on the envelope is spotted.
2. **Do . . . whenever you have something newsworthy to report.** Not all of your releases will be used, but none of your information will be published if it is not shared.
3. **Write in a crisp, active, brief and concise format.** Do not try to impress people with your vocabulary. Stay away from "education-ese" and abbreviations. Use short sentences and paragraphs. If one adjective communicates what needs to be said, do not use two.
4. **Understand the style of news releases.** They should be double-spaced and on one side of the paper. Review "The Worlds Shortest Course for Educational Journalism" for key style points, or you can probably find a copy of the Associated Press Stylebook or Dougdale for Writing and Paper Format, at your local library.
5. **Remember the inverted pyramid format.** This means report the most important information first. If editors like your release, but cannot use all of it, they will cut from the bottom.
6. **Answer the "5 W's and the H" early in your release the who/what, where, when, why and how.** Those are the key elements all reporters learn in News writing 101, and what they will look for in your release. You should provide that information early in your release in the first or second paragraph.
7. **Always have a contact name and phone number on your news release.** Your article may be great, but if there is one question in the reporter's mind and no way to get an answer, the release is likely not to be used.
8. **Treat all news media equally.** Do not mail a release to one newspaper on Monday and to the other on Thursday. Or, do not personally deliver the release to the television station and mail it to the radio station. The news media are competitive.
9. **Seek advice from people experienced in news writing.** This might be an experienced journalism student, the newspaper adviser, a school system Public Relations professional or even a local reporter or editor.
10. **Be Patient.** Understand that the reporters and editors receive an avalanche of news releases and pitches to cover stories every day. If your first submission is not published, that does not mean you did a bad job. Keep trying. Do not be demanding in asking why your release was not printed on the front page. Instead, inquire whether it met the needs of the reporter and how you can improve.