



# Opportunities to recognize student achievement

Your district has many programs, services, organizations and functions that provide excellent opportunities to recognize and reward student achievement. Here are several to consider, and perhaps you have others in your district and community. The opportunities are all around you, start promoting your students.

- Advanced Placement courses
- Alternative education programs
- Alumni achievement
- Art shows
- Artist-in-residence program
- Battle of the books
- Board of education meetings
- Book talks/author visits
- Business advisory council
- Business partnerships
- Career center opportunities and activities
- Career day
- Celebrations of learning
- College fair
- College partnerships
- Community partnerships
- Construction updates on new facilities
- Diversity clubs/activities
- Extracurricular activities
- Field trips or school trips
- Food services
- Foreign exchange programs/students
- Freshman, middle school, kindergarten orientation
- Future organizations such as FFA, FAA and FTA
- Gifted services
- Health fairs
- Honor roll recognition
- Innovative student projects
- Internships
- Intramural athletics
- Job shadowing opportunities
- Key communicators
- Language classes for parents/residents
- Literacy night and science night
- Local education foundation
- Mentorship programs
- Military partnerships
- Mock trial program
- Model United Nations
- Music performance programs
- National Merit winners
- New school dedications and tours
- One-to-one technology programs
- Online school/night school
- Parent education networks
- Parent University (mini courses for parents)
- Parent-student activity nights
- Peer-to-peer programs
- Poetry slams
- Postsecondary opportunities
- Preschool
- PTO, PTA and academic boosters
- Red Ribbon Week
- Robotics club
- School resource officers/student safety
- School-sponsored camps
- School-sponsored clubs
- School-sponsored extended day programs
- Science fair
- Science Olympiad
- Senior citizen nights at activities
- Senior portfolios
- Service-learning projects
- Special Olympics
- Spelling bee
- STEM program/activities
- Strategic planning with the community
- Student athletics
- Student-led parent conferences
- Student performances
- Student scholarships
- Summer programs
- Teacher professional development
- Tech-prep programs
- Theater productions
- Veterans Day activities
- Volunteer programs
- Wellness programs



# Getting media coverage for the positive events in your district

Whether you're looking to inform your community about a new school program, accolades for the district or a critical levy issue, media coverage is one of the best ways to get noticed. Unfortunately, getting press coverage isn't as simple as firing off a press release and hoping for the best. Successful media coverage is the result of careful planning and hard work.

Reporters traditionally have been taught to check in regularly with their sources. However, as newsrooms have downsized, reporters have more to cover and are putting more effort into social media to gain followers. School communicators can serve their districts well by understanding reporters' time constraints and their daily requirements, which often include posting on social media and recording videos as well as reporting and working on stories to fill the daily newspaper or evening newscast. Assisting them in every way possible for their production needs goes a long way in scoring media coverage.

## 5 ways to connect with reporters *before* you need them

Typically, a reporter from the local newspaper has been assigned to cover the school beat or board meetings on a regular basis. Generally, that information is available on the newspaper's website, including a phone number and email address. Get to know the education reporter ASAP. Invite them to coffee or lunch, and make sure you're armed with story ideas when you connect.

- **Find out a reporter's preferences** — How does the reporter like to be contacted for stories? Email? Text? Social media? What deadlines does the reporter have on a weekly basis? Know that journalists, like school communicators, have very busy schedules with constant deadlines. Scheduling a Friday afternoon meeting is one of the worst times for a newspaper reporter because he or she is likely crunched to provide stories for Saturday, Sunday and Monday. What type of stories does he or she like to cover? Every reporter is different.
- **Be available and easy to find when a reporter needs you** — When you want to promote your event or story, don't put off reporters. Your availability helps them do their job better and also builds a relationship with the reporter, who will want to continue working with you. A timely reply also can help expand the story. Your

information may help lead to the reporter to positive perspectives from other sources. Be sure to let reporters know how they can reach you, either by email or phone.

- **Before pitching a story idea, get to know more about the reporter** — Doing some extra homework will go a long way in connecting with a reporter for the first time. Google them and find out what stories he or she has covered. Does the reporter provide fair and balanced media coverage? Get a sense of what he or she likes to cover. Also, a little flattery can go a long way.
- **Create thoughtful ideas** — Be brief and clear on why a reporter should care about an event. Help the reporter have an idea about what his or her story might look like, including examples of photos or possible sources. Could it be a feature story? Or, perhaps, be part of a national story or trend? And, it's OK to follow up, just don't be a pest.
- **Stay in touch** — Building good relationships with reporters requires you to stay in touch, even when you're not pitching a story. One way is to let them know you're reading or seeing their work. Follow them on social media and share their work. Finally, meeting for coffee or lunch is a great way to build strong relationships with members of the media.





# Using infographics to tell your story

One way to effectively tell your student achievement story is through an infographic. An infographic uses a mix of text and graphics — charts, icons, symbols and pictures — to make complex information easier to understand. Infographics can be used to convey key information, present data in a compelling format and highlight district successes.

Infographics are most effective when they are simple and focus on one key message. OSBA created a sample infographic that you can mimic to tell your student achievement story. The sample infographic is on the next page. The OSBA infographic was created using the free resources on the website Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)). Canva has tools that help you create infographics and numerous tutorials to help you through the process. Canva is free to sign up and use, although you can pay for additional features. It also offers free tutorials such as “Introduction to infographics,” available at [www.canva.com/learn/tutorials/introduction-infographics](http://www.canva.com/learn/tutorials/introduction-infographics). You can find numerous YouTube tutorials by searching “Canva infographic tutorial.”

The following data on the OSBA infographic can be found in the Ohio Department of Education state report cards:

- enrollment data
- district spending per pupil and how it compares to the state average
- percent of finances spent in the classroom
- student demographics
- graduation rate
- percent that passed an AP test and scored better than 1, 2 or 3.

Other data that could be used:

- additional program offerings: number of College Credit Plus courses offered; International Baccalaureate program; distance learning courses
- gifted services provided
- number of teachers and administrators
- ratio of students to teachers in classrooms

Use the data that showcases how your district excels. The OSBA infographic is an example; use the data the best tells your story. Add areas of pride for your district and community and delete items that aren't as important to your stakeholders.

Once you have the data you want to show, consider holding a student contest to see who can create the best infographic. Share the infographic on your website and social media platforms to promote how your district is helping students achieve.



# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

## OUR DISTRICT



# 3,400

students attend My Town School District, which covers **30 square miles**

This is a **10% enrollment increase** over 2017.

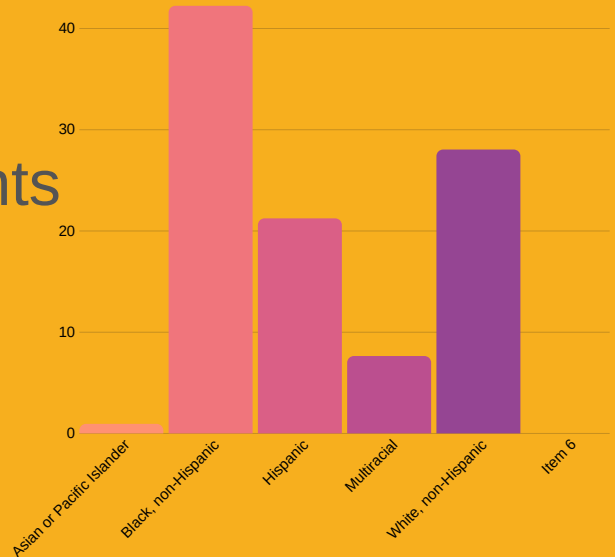
# \$8,076

spending per pupil. The state average is \$9,149 per pupil



**68%** of finances are spent in the classroom

### Our students



## CLASS OF 2018



# 97%

graduation rate

# \$50,000

in scholarships given to the class of 2018



## Next step for our grads

# 41%

higher education

# 15%

military

# 44%

skilled workforce



## ACHIEVING AT ALL LEVELS

# 28

honors courses



# 15

AP courses

# 5%

passed an AP test earning a 3 or better

# 45

online courses offered



# 50+

clubs and activities



# 29

sports offered in high school

# 85%

of students perform more than 24 hours of volunteer service before graduation





# Tips and Tricks for Using Social Media to Communicate Student Achievement in Your District

The success our students experience during their time in public education and after graduation is crucial to their well-being and to the vitality of your community. Student achievement directly benefits districts by building credibility and trust and helping to stave off the competitive pressures of open enrollment, charter schools, online schools, and homeschooling.


Benefits, however, may only be derived if school districts communicate and promote achievements. How else will parents, guardians, taxpayers, businesses, and other key stakeholders know about the good things you and your students are achieving?

- ▶ Dedicate space on the home page of the district's website for a student achievement feature where student accomplishments are continuously posted, along with photo(s) to compel viewership.
- ▶ Update the feature with each new accomplishment achieved to keep it fresh and to show student achievement is a district priority and that objectives are continuously being realized.
- ▶ Expand on the student achievements in other relevant areas of the website including news, curricular departments, awards, or even a separate "Student Achievement" page.
- ▶ Include background on the achievement, significance to the individual and the school/district, and quotes from the students and educators on how the achievement was realized in a written article or even a Q&A format.
- ▶ Post student achievement content to Facebook with photo(s) as soon as achievements occur. Provide a link from the Facebook post to the expanded content on the website.
- ▶ Write a press release for distribution to local print publications, especially to weekly or monthly community newspapers that tend to focus on local school and district happenings.
- ▶ Notify local cable news, other TV, and radio stations of special award ceremonies where significant student achievements are being recognized or where there are mass achievements (strength in numbers).
- ▶ Invite the stations to attend, or provide your own video coverage that they may edit to create a news short.
- ▶ Include a regular feature in the district newsletter that announces student achievements and keeps a tally of recognition for the year. Give the feature a clever name and include photo(s) to compel reader interest.
- ▶ Develop an email program to "blast" achievements when they occur, or blast them on a quarterly basis if that timing better fits your district's overall communications strategy.
- ▶ Add Tweets to the district Twitter page for even more timely announcements.

300m is your OSBA endorsed provider for communications audits, newsletter programs, social media, and more to help build and implement your district's communications plan.



Contact **Cindy Carvour** for more information.

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# Creating an effective communication management plan

The purpose of a communication plan is to define who needs to be aware of and informed about the project, how and how often information will be distributed and who will be responsible for the distribution.

A good plan should address:

- What information will be communicated — to include the level of detail and format?
- How will the information be communicated — in meetings, email, telephone, web portal, etc.?
- When will the information be distributed — the frequency of project communication both formal and informal?
- Who is responsible for communicating project information?
- How will any sensitive or confidential information be communicated, and who must authorize this?
- What standard templates, formats, styles or documents must the project use for communicating?

In the table below, you'll find some of the essential elements of a school district communication plan. While each district will have its own set of stakeholders and manage its communication plan differently, these elements can help you get started on the path toward effectively communicating your district's key messages.

The plan can be created monthly, quarterly or annually — just be sure to review it regularly to ensure your stakeholders receive targeted communication and as a reminder to include any hot topics that may arise. Perhaps most importantly, be flexible and adapt after evaluating the effectiveness of your district's messages and stakeholder reception of the information.

| Stakeholder                          | Key message | Priority | Communication vehicle | Time frame | Person responsible |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Students                             |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Teachers/staff                       |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Parents/caregivers                   |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Community                            |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Residents without children in school |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Area businesses                      |             |          |                       |            |                    |
| Others                               |             |          |                       |            |                    |

# MY TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

# COMMUNICATION PLAN

## **Mission:**

## **Vision:**

## **District Profile:**

### **Communications and Community Relations**

Community participation in our schools is essential for promoting and maintaining the quality of education for our students. A planned school communication program encourages stakeholder participation in and support of the educational program as it:

- encourages stakeholder decision-making and participation in school functions;
- communicates district educational goals, strengths and challenges;
- provides information regarding school activities, accomplishments and successes;
- enlists community resources to support educational programs.

### **Communication Strategies**

On an ongoing basis, the district will commit to the following strategies:

- to demonstrate that what is happening in the schools is meeting the desires and standards the community expects;
- to demonstrate widely recognized qualities of an exemplary educational program, both in terms of practices and evidence of student learning;
- to demonstrate specifically what excellence looks like in programs that result in high-performing students and what teachers and staff do to encourage and support these students;
- to demonstrate to all taxpayers, with tangible evidence, that their money is being well spent;
- to invite the community into the school facilities to see firsthand the stewardship of the physical and relational environment that supports student learning;
- to reach out to all stakeholders with easily understood, timely information and punctual responses;
- to maintain a strong relationship with current families.

### **The district commits to accomplishing these strategies through the following objectives:**

- sharing information quickly, openly and accurately; it should be factual, using summaries and drawing implications as needed to improve understanding;
- promoting the positive aspects of issues and events and include how negative implications will be addressed;
- sharing ordinary successes and progress as well as the culminating evidence of successes;
- taking responsibility for what the district does or does not do toward ensuring a high-quality education for all students;
- focusing on thoughtful planning, attention to factors of quality and the involvement of many in successful implementation;
- highlighting the ongoing conduct of the school district as a benefit to the community in general and the various stakeholders in particular.

### **Identification of Stakeholders/Target Audiences**

Every person who is a beneficiary of the endeavors of the district is an audience member. Each should have ready access to information and/or be able to collaborate in decisions about the schools and support of school efforts. The district needs input from these audiences and feedback about the benefits of these efforts.

- Internal audiences include: teachers and substitute teachers (those who live in the district and those who live outside of it); administrators; school secretaries; cooks, custodians, maintenance staff, technology staff and bus drivers; coaches and athletic directors; parent booster groups supporting athletics, music, theater, art and gifted education; school and special needs PTOs and PTO Council; and Board of Education members.
- External audiences include: parents of students in the district; nonschool parents who have raised families, have young children or grandchildren in the district; retired citizens; residents without children; area businesses and employees; Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, service organizations and local realtor groups; various religious groups and institutions; early childhood day care programs; programs providing before- and after-school care, such as YMCA; village or city councils, public library and recreation department; colleges or universities; and news media, both print and electronic.

## **Formulating the Message**

Effective communication should feature knowledge of the audiences' beliefs, attitudes and concerns, rely on reinforcement and repetition and convey information in a variety of ways. Expert spokespersons add credibility so it is important to identify the appropriate messenger.

## **Tactics**

- Maintain an attractive website with timely and up-to-date information and news articles.
- Control the message with appropriate social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Solicit news coverage of school events, achievements and programs in both print and broadcast media (make a list with their contact information). Write a regular column for local paper.
- Send regular communications via U.S. mail to every household, with additional quantities in brochure holders at public locations, such as retail businesses.
- Maintain an email/telephone voicemail network that channels school information to district families and the community.
- Create fliers, posters, banners and electronic signage.
- Offer public forums/town halls to communicate the district's mission, vision and priorities.
- Maintain a presence at meetings of all parent groups, including music parents, athletic boosters or special needs PTO.
- Seek input from and follow activities of leadership teams and staff committees that meet regularly.
- Conduct a biannual online survey of internal and external audiences.
- Produce a written annual report and post on website, have copies available in the offices, deliver with PowerPoint and include in the school calendar.
- Add a section to the board of education meeting agenda for open discussion.
- Implement a well-conceived awards program and alumni events, such as a Hall of Fame ceremony.
- Strategically place suggestion boxes in the central office and school buildings.
- Recruit a champion to be a spokesperson, write letters to editor, etc. for controversial topics or levy issues.
- Develop talking points for important messages that all will use.

## **Evaluation Tools**

- Timing, timeliness and content
- Maintenance of website, social media
- Expansion of email network
- Rate of public participation
- Anecdotal information and feedback
- Home values in the area
- Successful ballot issues
- Awareness research
- Use year in review to plan for hot topics