



Department of
**Education
and Training**

Promoting your school



Practical ideas for:

- school reputation
- community partnerships
- newsletters
- events
- media
- logo
- brochure
- website

From the Director General

In my Classroom First Strategy, I outlined the importance of promoting the quality of our public education system and the valuable role individual schools play in establishing links with their communities.

Promoting your school is an online toolkit developed specifically to help you achieve this goal. The toolkit is simple to use and has ideas that are not expensive to implement. It was developed after consultation with a range of principals and teachers. I am grateful to the many school staff who have trialled it in their schools and recommended many of the ideas.

Promoting your school is about taking one school at a time as you develop your own unique ethos and special character.

I believe you will find this a useful resource as you strive to provide an excellent educational environment and reflect the values and aspirations of your local community.



SHARYN O'NEILL
DIRECTOR GENERAL



Contents

This toolkit has practical ideas to help promote your school and build better relationships with your community. Use the checklists and templates to make things easy for staff, parents and students.

1 Improving your school reputation

2 Building partnerships with your community

Certificate of appreciation 1 - customise for your school

Certificate of appreciation 2 - customise for your school

3 Getting the most out of your newsletter

4 Staging successful events

5 Promoting your school in the local media

6 School logo

7 Developing a brochure

8 Developing a website

1

Improving your school's reputation

We all want to have a good reputation.

One way for schools to build a strong reputation is to use a marketing plan. Some schools call this 'community building' or 'promotion'.

When used properly, 'marketing' or 'community building' is an excellent way to focus the whole school community on improvement. Schools which do this best make it part of core business and link it to the school plan.

- Underpinning the plan is knowing **who you are** and **what you are doing**. Know your core business.
- Ask yourself what makes your school unique and special. Every school has a unique selling point that differentiates it from others. What is it that makes you stand out?
- What is the essence of your school, your staff, your students and their families. Know your students and their families and determine their desires and aspirations for their children.
- Your school will have a certain reputation or brand. Are you happy with this, or does your school want to improve or change its reputation?
- Survey the school community. Find out what families like about your school. What is important to them? When you get new enrolments, ask parents why they chose your school (entry survey). When parents withdraw their child, ask them why (exit survey).
- With all this information gathered, determine the message you want your school to project. What message(s) do you want people to associate with your school? This could be a single brand image that underpins all that you do and stand for, eg Dalkeith Primary School: Celebrating Success, Carson Street School: Expert staff, Exceptional programs. These brand images reflect each school's core business and the desires of the school's families. Use this consistent message in all communications.
- You could determine up to three key messages that the school wants to communicate to others.
- Be clear about the messages. Your school community must know what these messages are.
- Determine who needs to know about your school. Where are these messages going?
- Be strategic in targeting your audience. If you need to increase numbers in kindergarten and pre-primary you could target child care centres and play groups by offering parent nights with expert speakers on early childhood issues. High schools that want to increase Year 8 numbers should target their messages to reach primary school families as early as Year 4. High schools can run information sessions on adolescence and equipping parents with skills to guide their children, or information regarding internet issues.
- Develop a plan. Make it simple and achievable. List: Action, Target audience, Timeline and Responsibility (who will do it).
- Include key activities like parent communications/newsletter, events, media and community partnerships. See information in other chapters of this toolkit.
- Link the plan to your School Development Plan to make it part of core business.

2

Building partnerships with your community

Building partnerships with your community will help create a learning centre that gives students the maximum education opportunities.

These are schools where teachers, students and their families work in collaboration with local business, industry, other schools and the wider community.

1 Building partnerships

- Get together a working party of enthusiastic staff, parents, student representatives and other community members.
- Brainstorm who is in your community.
 - Local government
 - University, TAFEWA college, your feeder primary or high school, child care centres, playgroups
 - Local business, industry, chamber of commerce
 - Organisations – sporting groups, library, church groups, volunteer organisations
 - Alumni
 - Media
 - Local residents, rate payers association
- Invite representatives from the wider community to join you.
- Have a number of key school contacts and liaison personnel directly responsible for each group of community partners to ensure you develop personal and productive relationships with the community.
- Identify what you want to achieve. This might include:
 - increasing school enrolments
 - improving learning outcomes
 - improving public perception of your school
 - strengthening parent participation
 - improving teacher retention.
- Break up into sub-committees to tackle individual issues, eg partnerships with educational institutions, media, events, winning awards, communications.
- Encourage and support student-centred initiatives to help young people connect with your community. Use community service to ensure your school contributes to the local community.
- Open your school sites/facilities and make them more accessible to the community. This will foster opportunities for reciprocal sharing with outside groups/organisations.
- Acknowledge, reward and support your community partners through community breakfasts, sundowners, personal invitations to all school functions and events, and networking opportunities. This helps ensure a genuine relationship by creating an “extended family” environment.

2 Building partnerships with your community (cont.)

2 Identify, use and cherish your volunteers

Schools are packed full of parents who have expertise and experience in various occupations. Their hobbies and recreational pursuits can also be a valuable tool for the school.

- The first job of a school wanting to build a strong, healthy community is to identify these people.
- Develop a database of parent occupations and interests.
- Then approach parents to participate in school life (eg in a class or whole school event, as part of an ongoing project or as a regular in day to day programs such as listening to reading).
- Let your volunteers know that you value their contribution. Recognise their efforts with a card or certificate. Two certificate templates are included in this toolkit.



Customise these certificates for your school.

Change the colours and font as necessary to reflect your school image.

Find these certificates in Our Policies. Search for Promoting your school and look under Related Items.

- Consider presenting the certificates at assembly or including a mention in the school newsletter.
- Hold a morning tea or other event to publicly recognise your supporters.

3

Getting the most out of your newsletter

Your newsletter is one of the most effective ways to communicate about your school with your local community.

The newsletter is an up-to-date snapshot of what your school is all about and is an opportunity to:

- spread the good news about your students and staff
- celebrate school achievements
- highlight your school's strengths
- keep parents and the community informed
- maintain a good relationship with your local community.

1 Design

- Develop a template so each edition looks similar.
- Keep the design simple and consistent.
- Remove clutter, keep the layout orderly and include sections.
- Use white space generously for a better look and easier reading.
- Avoid the trap of overloading your newsletter with special effects. Too many fancy fonts and clipart images only distract the reader.
- Use breakout boxes (no more than one a page) to highlight information and help break up text on a page.
- Limit the use of fonts. Choose one font for your text and another for headlines. A third font can be used occasionally to highlight special events or activities. Choose standard fonts which are easier to read for main text such as Verdana, Arial or Helvetica.
- A font size of 11 or 12 point is recommended.
- Headlines are easiest to read in lower case and bold.
- If you upload the newsletter on the school website, protect the identity of your students. Ensure you have signed permission (for web use) for any photographs that appear and remove students' names or at least their surnames.

2 Content

- Keep the language simple, positive and friendly.
- Include photos of happy students, preferably on the front page.
- Avoid education jargon.
- Avoid acronyms that are not explained with the first mention eg LAP (Learning Assistance Program).
- Use inclusive language such as 'we', 'our' and 'us' to help build community cohesion.
- Keep each story brief because many readers lead busy lives.
- Make sure the main point of each story appears early on (similar to newspaper articles) so if readers only glance through they will not miss your message.

3

Getting the most out of your newsletter (cont.)

3 Distribution

Your newsletter will primarily be aimed at parents. However you can gain extra mileage by sending copies to the wider community. Consider including your local:

- library
- child care centres and play groups (primary schools)
- feeder primary schools (eg high schools give a copy to each Year 7 child once a term)
- real estate agents
- media outlets
- businesses
- Member of Parliament
- shire council.

If the newsletter is linked to the website make sure it is uploaded by the time the hard copies are distributed.

4 Staging successful events

A successful event is one of the best ways to get parents and the local community involved in your school.

This checklist sets out the key points you may wish to consider in preparing for your big event.

1 Set your objectives

- Define what you want to achieve. This will determine what sort of activity you stage. You may want to:
 - unify the school community
 - attract new students
 - build community awareness of your school and its strengths
 - establish relationships with external partners
 - raise money.

2 Committee

- Establish a planning committee with reliable and enthusiastic members.
- Put someone in charge of services and infrastructure for any event.

3 Planning

- Confirm your objectives.
- Determine your budget and gain any necessary approvals.
- Establish possible dates and venues.
- Notify your Director, school's local Member of Parliament and VIPs to confirm the date.
- Establish the budget you can afford.

4 Background information

- Write briefing notes (background, potential issues) and speech notes.
- Gather information for a media statement.

5 Location and venue

- Confirm the booking for the venue.
- Check parking facilities and parking attendants.
- Organise displays, student performances and background music (possibly provided by students).
- Organise a PA system and special power requirements (fax, phone, computers).
- Determine the availability of audiovisual aids, lectern and microphone (and check height), and setting-up time.
- Consider whether you'll need a marquee or poor weather venue.

4 Staging successful events (cont.)

- Determine the lighting requirements.
- Allocate seating if necessary and reserve seating for VIPs and media (for a dinner, set table plans and place cards).
- Determine wheelchair access.
- Consider emergency requirements – should you inform St John’s ambulance and the police? Get local shire/council approval if necessary.
- Consider whether you will require portable toilets for a large audience.
- Order the plaque early and ensure all dates and spelling are correct.
- Ensure you can hang signs and arrange display boards.

6 Invitations and guests

- Prepare the guest list. Make sure it relates to your objectives.
- Select and instruct the person who will take RSVPs.
- Set the event’s date, venue and time; provide guest names, titles and addresses for the invitation and RSVP contact details and date.
- Organise the graphics, printing, labels, envelopes and distribution of the invitation.
- Send an invitation to local media.
- Follow up on non-respondents.

7 Publicity

- Media – contact the Department’s Media Unit for advice.
- Draft a media statement for local newspaper (know their deadline) or radio station.
- Know the key message and information you want to communicate.
- Consider a local ‘letter-drop’ of a flyer.
- Consider banners to hang on the school fence.
- Have an appropriate media spokesperson. It is best if the principal is the voice/face of the school.

8 Catering and refreshments

- Confirm numbers.
- Organise the eating area, tables and seating as required.
- Determine the caterer’s requirements.
- Allocate tasks to helpers.
- Determine set-up time for the caterers.
- Watch the budget.

4 Staging successful events (cont.)

9 Agenda and program

- Determine the guest speakers, MC and timing of events.
- Send copies of the program to the official group (those who are speaking or are part of the formal proceedings).
- Decide whether you'll need gifts and if so, what budget.
- Provide refreshments (water/mints) for guest speakers.

10 Other

- Print name tags.
- Organise and brief the photographer.
- Book and confirm any accommodation and travel requirements.
- Arrange child minding area/personnel and information/registration desk if required.

11 After the event

- Write thank you letters.
- Review the event, write a short summary including highlights, number of people who attended, budget and future plans.

5

Promoting your school in the local media

The local media – especially local newspapers and community radio stations – can be a great way to reach your community with positive school news.

However, it can be frustrating when you have a terrific story that the media won't cover. This checklist has tips to help increase your chance of generating media coverage. And remember that if the media contact you about a sensitive issue refer them to the Department's Media Unit.

1 Getting to know your local media

- Get to know your local paper's editorial staff, especially the local reporter who covers education stories.
- Make an appointment to meet and tell them about your school. Why not invite them to present a writing award at your school assembly.
- Find out the deadline and publishing dates for your newspaper.
- Contact the media well in advance. For example, if you want to encourage people to attend your event on Friday 12 May, the day the paper is distributed, you need the story to appear on Friday 5 May. This means you need to contact the paper at the beginning of the week. Follow up with a phone call to make sure your story has been received.
- Use the community notice pages and diary of events sections of the newspaper. Journalists often look at community notices in their own paper to get ideas for more in depth stories.

2 Planning your approach

- Make your story newsworthy. Focus on what is new, interesting, unusual, quirky or topical (linked to current events or affairs).
- Invite the journalist, via telephone or a brief written statement, to attend and report on the event.
- If no reporter turns up don't give up. Send a media statement after the event.

3 Writing a media statement

- Keep it short, simple and fewer than 10 brief paragraphs.
- Use your school letterhead or a media statement template with your school logo.
- Insert a catchy headline to grab attention.
- Begin with a 'lead paragraph' of 25 words or fewer. Put your school name in the opening words/line.
- Include the most newsworthy details up front, descending to the least relevant details. (If there is a space problem a sub-editor will usually cut from the bottom.)
- Make sure you quote someone such as the principal or the teacher responsible for the program or event.
- Use **WWWWW** to summarise the story: who, what, when, where and why.
- Include a message about your school's strengths – what sets your school apart. This will help build a positive image in the community.
- List contact details for the journalist to find out more.
- Contact the Department's Media Unit on 9264 5723 for advice on preparing a statement or for a second opinion on your draft.

5

Promoting your school in the local media (cont.)

4 Photographs

- Send the journalist an attractive photograph to increase the chance of your story appearing.
- Include a caption with the names of those pictured.
- Gain written parental permission for any photographs of students.
- Take print quality photograph (resolution 300 dpi). Before emailing it to the media, reduce the file size to 120 dpi with the camera software or Microsoft Photo Editor. Save a high resolution copy.
- Don't miss out on photo opportunities; make sure staff have cameras for all excursions, activities and events. Encourage parents and students to submit good photos for the school to use.

5 Speaking to the media

- Be positive.
- Make your information accurate and relevant.
- Don't give information "off the record". If you don't want the information used, DON'T SAY IT!
- Avoid personal opinions. You represent the opinion of your school and the Department.

6 When the media contact you about a sensitive issue

- Contact the Department's Media Unit on 9264 5821 (after hours) before you agree to an interview or make any comment.
- Refer the journalist to the Media Unit by saying: "It is proper protocol to contact the Media Unit in the first instance."

EXAMPLE OF MEDIA RELEASE

Title:	MEDIA RELEASE	Identifier: Emblem/logo
Date:	23 November 2007	
Headline:	New Aboriginal college uniform on parade	
Snappy intro:	Models from the Black Pearl agency strutted their stuff in the uniform of Midvale's new Aboriginal college yesterday.	
Who, what, where, when, how:	Children from the Aboriginal modelling agency paraded the outfits at Midland Gate Shopping Centre as part of an enrolment drive for the school, which opens next year.	
Why:	The school already has 145 enrolments – its goal – but is hoping to recruit more non-Aboriginal children from the region to study there. In its first year, the school will cater for Kindergarten to Year 3 students, and will gradually expand to Year 10.	
Spokesperson:	School principal (name), who looked after a display at Midland Gate during the parades said the idea was to ensure as many people as possible knew about the school.	
Quotations:	<p>"We've already met our expectations for enrolment," (name) said.</p> <p>"But we have room for 230 students and we'd really like to have that many on board, especially with a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.</p> <p>"The school will have a strong focus on student welfare and discipline to ensure we provide an environment where each child can achieve their best."</p>	
Message about your school:	(Name) said the children in the parade modelled the new school's electric blue and black uniform.	
Background for ongoing projects:	Construction of the school, next to Midvale Speed Dome, is on schedule and will be complete for the start of the 2008 school year.	
When:	The parades took place in the main hall of the shopping centre at various times on Saturday 22 November.	
Contact details:	Media contact: (name and contact) Liz Di Giovanni, 9264 5821	

6 School logo

A good school logo is one important tool for communicating with your community.

It should represent the spirit and identity of your school and create a memorable impression about your school in the mind of the public.

1 What makes a good logo

- Review your school logo.
- A logo should consist of:
 - your school's name
 - a mark or symbol representing your school
 - and may include a slogan (or brand image) that simply summarises your school.
- Ensure your logo is simple and eye-catching.
- Avoid old fashioned, flowing typefaces which are difficult to read, print and embroider.
- Limit the colours to ensure it is easy to reproduce on printed material, electronic/ website information and on uniforms.
- Make it appealing to boys and girls.
- Build awareness in the community by placing your logo prominently on as many aspects of school life as possible:
 - stationery
 - newsletters
 - advertisements
 - signage
 - brochures
 - school memorabilia
 - uniforms
 - website.

2 Developing a logo

- Form a committee of motivated students, staff and parents.
- Answer these questions to help guide development:
 - Q. What are the key characteristics of your school?
 - Q. What sets your school apart from others?
 - Q. What are the strengths of your school?
 - Q. What captures the heart of your school?
- Contract a designer. Tell them the answers to these questions to help them understand your school.
- Contact the Department's Corporate Communications and Marketing branch on 9264 4899 for details about cost effective designers.
- Remember a logo is no substitute for quality education. It only works when the experience of students and parents is consistent with what the logo promises.

7 Developing a brochure

A school brochure is sometimes the first contact a prospective family has with your school.

Make sure your brochure is attractive so families will pick it up, and easy to read so they will be encouraged to read it.

1 Information

- Go back to your research and identify the key strengths of your school. Make note of academic achievements, excellent teachers, values and special programs.
- Identify your target audience and 'speak' to them (ie parents of preschool/primary school students or primary/high school students).
- Write about each strength in terms of the benefits for the child if they decide to attend your school.
- Use conversational language – it is more engaging and easier to read and understand.
- Keep it simple and concise.
- If you have to use acronyms, ensure they are clearly explained in the first instance.
- Avoid education jargon – it can be confusing and off-putting.

2 Look and feel

- Leave plenty of white space.
- Use dot points rather than complete sentences – they are easier to read and get the message across. Be cleverly economical with words – less is often more.
- Use very good photos of happy students and staff that convey your message without words.
- Use matt paper (115 to 130gsm).

3 Call to action

- Make sure your 'call to action' is prominent and explains what it is you want the parents to do, for example, enrol now/contact the school for more information.
- Make it easy to contact your school – give options (phone, fax, email, web, postal and physical address). Include a map if your school is hard to find.
- Have a "How did you hear about us?" checklist by the phone. Keep a record to see if the money spent on the brochure is generating enquiries (return on your investment).

7 Developing your website

Your website should reflect your school's brand. It must communicate the key messages your school wants to say about itself.

1 Development

When building a new website or revamping an existing site, first get a group involved. One person cannot be in charge of "doing the website".

- Identify the audience. Who are you trying to reach? Your own school, the wider community, prospective parents?
- Identify the purpose of the site. Is it for promotional purposes, attracting new students or staff? Is it for staff and/or student/parent use? Is it a collaborative resource for several schools or organisations?
- Start small and make sure you have the people and skills to keep your website up to date.

2 Content and structure

Your website must be easy to navigate. Organise the content so users can move around the site easily. Include for example the following:

- Home
 - About us
 - Teaching and learning
 - Resources
 - News and dates
 - Links
 - Contact us.
- Make sure your home page is interesting, informative and up to date.
 - Leave room for expansion.
 - Avoid "Under construction" pages as they frustrate users.
 - Use suitable words for links rather than 'Click here'.
 - Include clear link buttons on every page to 'Home'.

3 Design

Use attractive photos that send the messages you want about your school.

Remember a picture sends a thousand words!

- Use photos with a maximum 72 dpi (dots per inch)
- Photos of your students/teachers need to have the subject taking up $\frac{3}{4}$ of the photo. Get up close!
- While photos should be fun, attractive and reflect your core business, always keep in mind STANDARDS. Are students in school uniform? Are staff appropriately dressed?
- Photoshop details which detract from your positive message.

7 Developing your website (cont.)

- While school facilities may need to be showcased, remember it's the experiences the students/families have at your school that will influence your reputation. Try to reflect those experiences in your photos.
- Don't overload your site with photos because dial up users will have a long download time and may give up in frustration.
- Avoid brightly coloured backgrounds because they can tire viewers' eyes.
- Remember white space is OK.

4 Writing for the web

- Web pages tend to be scanned rather than read. Therefore make sure your text is concise and direct.
- Keep the tone warm and friendly, not bureaucratic.
- Use brief sentences, short paragraphs, dot points and simple language.
- Avoid 'eduspeak' and acronyms (eg SAER).
- Use sub-headings, bold text and italics to break up the page.
- Avoid underlining as this can be confused with a web link.

5 Maintenance

- There should be more than one person who is skilled in keeping the website up to date.
- Make sure your website is current and shows a vibrant and active school.
- If newsletters are linked then do so at a regular time each week/month.

6 Ideas

- Include letters of commendation for the school or staff and letters of thanks.
- Add links that support your brand or your key messages. For example, an environmentally sustainable school will add links which are relevant.

7 Keeping students safe

- Gain written parental permission to use photos of students aged under 18.
- Use only first names on the web. Check carefully any newsletters you upload.
- Do not include addresses or any details which may identify where students live.