



# A Guide for School Publicity

Public Information Office

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# Your Role as Publicity Representative

Congratulations and *thank you* for accepting the assignment as your school's **Publicity Representative**. By designating you with this role, your Principal has indicated that you know a lot about your school and enjoy sharing its good news with others. You realize that there are great stories just waiting to be told about your school's people and programs.

## What exactly is a Publicity Representative?

The Publicity Representative is the Principal's designee for working with the Public Information Office to spread the good news about students, teachers, and school activities. A Publicity Representative is an employee who is knowledgeable and excited about the activities occurring in his or her school. **(Please note, you are not the crisis communicator.** That responsibility rests with the school administrative team and the system's communications professionals.)

Publicity Representatives are **collaborative planners** who work with school leaders, department chairpersons as well as volunteer and business partners to tell the good news about their schools.

## What's your assignment?

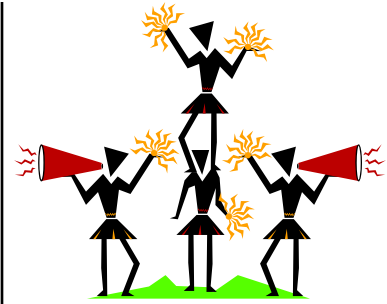
You are your school's head cheerleader and have the opportunity to increase community support for your school. In addition to the many wonderful things you already do for students and faculty, you now have the opportunity to draw a spotlight to your school.

## Is this a difficult assignment?

Not at all. It does, however, take a little organization, planning, and follow-through. Your work in your local school shows that these are skills you already possess and rely on daily. All you need is the correct information to begin the process of school promotion.

## Why are Publicity Representatives needed?

The Public Information staff cannot cover all of the great things occurring in our schools. With a district as large as ours we simply can't cover individual school events, but we can support your school and your work through our office's partnership with you!



Publicity  
Representatives  
are ...



Knowledgeable about  
school events!

# Publicize Yourself Among Your Peers

You can't gather all the news! Let your co-workers know you are your school's Publicity Representative. Perhaps you could ask for a few minutes of time during a staff meeting to explain your role and solicit good news. Maybe you'd find it easier to send out an informative email to your colleagues. Use whatever works best for you! Soon, you'll find out about all sort of events and programs that might be newsworthy.

Some other tips:

- **Remind co-workers often of your responsibility.** Like all of us, they can get busy and forget that you are the one who can promote the good things going on in their classrooms.
- **Develop a process for collecting school news.** Just like a process is already in place to get information included in the morning/afternoon announcements or the school newsletter, there should be a process for getting information submitted to you for generating school publicity.
- **Develop a way for co-workers to easily contact you.** Create a staff mailbox that is solely for good publicity items or send periodic email reminders that you are collecting story ideas. Once the habit is created, you'll never have to beg for information again!
- Make sure that **everyone in your school** knows that you are the "go-to" person for relaying news to the DCSS Update and that all news stories should be sent to you rather than directly to the Public Information Office.



# Improving the *DCSS Update*

The DCSS Update has more than 1,300 subscribers from the community and we want more! We are so happy to have this group of interested people and we want to be sure they get as much good news about the system as possible. We also want to make sure that we put forward the best possible image to our constituents. And since the Update is a system-level publication, we want to make sure the information it contains is of interest to a broad audience. That's why we're somewhat selective about the stories we publish. Not that all your stories aren't great...they are! It's just that some are more appropriate for your school-level newsletter rather than the system-wide Update. The Update's main focus is on showcasing the many **honors, awards and achievements** of our students (and staff!), demonstrating **community relationships**, and **positive image building**, along with a listing of **upcoming events**.

## What Kinds of Stories Should You Submit?

**Remember—just because you like it doesn't mean others will!**

Christmas parties, CRCT kick-offs, spelling bees, club officer elections, all make for interesting school newsletter stories. **However, every school has them.** Your challenge for the DCSS Update is to submit stories that are unique and show your school in a light that would be interesting to readers **both inside and outside** of the school system. So, you may be asking, exactly what kinds of stories are we looking for to include in the Update? Well, some examples might be:

- Regional, state and national honors, awards and achievements
- Special initiatives that support and benefit student learning
- New and innovative academic programs
- Volunteer activities **that impact learning**
- Business partnership activities

Now, some examples of what we are not looking for in the Update:

- Club meeting reports
- Parties—Christmas, end-of-school, etc.
- School-level awards (i.e., school spelling bee winners)
- Kick-off events (CRCT, etc.)



## Ask Yourself...

- ◇ Who is my audience?
- ◇ What would my audience like to know?
- ◇ What would I like my audience to know?
- ◇ Would people outside my immediate community be interested in this?
- ◇ If I was not part of this program, would I be interested in it?
- ◇ How can I make my regular program seem new and different?

# All You Need is 5 W's and 1 H

All stories you send in to the Public Information Office should include the “5 W’s and 1 H.” **Who** is doing **What**. **When**, **Where** and **Why** this is significant. And, in our case, **How** *this impacts learning*.

## Always remember:

- The deadline for stories to appear in the next edition of the Update is Thursday at noon on the previous week. We prefer to print stories that are ***no more than two weeks old*** and ***will not print any story that is more than one month old***. Event details for the calendar should be submitted at least two weeks in advance.
- Send all stories by email to [lstuart@docoschools.org](mailto:lstuart@docoschools.org) (the submit-a-story form on the web has been discontinued)
- Either type your story into the body of the email message, or attach a Word document
- Use 1 space between sentences (2 spaces is a holdover from typewriter days).
- If sending pictures, choose the best **1 or 2**. Send the original, unedited, uncropped photo as a .jpg file. Do not embed photos in the email or Word document—it makes them unusable
- Keep your stories simple but interesting
- Check for understandability—minimize educational jargon
- Spell out **all acronyms** the first time they appear within a story (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP))
- Give both **first and last names** for each person in the story and an explanation of who they are (i.e., Janie Jones, President of 1st Best Bank of Albany)
- Ask yourself—”Does this story give the public an ‘inside look’ at education in the Dougherty County School System? Is it appropriate for system-wide and community distribution, or is it better featured in my school’s newsletter?”
- Make every effort to send **one final copy**. Multiple drafts and corrections are confusing and time-consuming
- Write as though your audience has never heard of the topic before
- Write from a relationship-building and positive image-building perspective rather than a feel-good perspective
- Send your info in early; be respectful of deadlines



Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

# Tips for Better School Photography



Great photos are one way to make your story stand out! Here are some tips to remember when getting behind the camera.

- **Try to limit group photos to four people or fewer when possible.** When a large group is involved in a great activity or has won an award, it's so tempting to line everyone up in rows and snap a photo of the whole group. However, group "line-ups" are some of the worst photos that you can make. When placed in the small space available in the Update, almost no one is recognizable and it makes no statement at all about the honor or event. *Instead, try taking an action photo of several participants engaged in the activity.*
- **Look for unusual angles for group photos.** Get on top of a playground slide or look up from below the stage; change your usual perspective.
- **Overshoot everything.** With digital cameras it doesn't cost any more to take a dozen photos than it does to take one. It's better to shoot too many pictures than to miss a photo because you didn't take enough. However, choose only the best 1 (2 at most) to submit along with your story.
- **Show people's faces in all pictures** of students or teachers unless you intentionally don't want to identify them.
- **Try to show some action in all pictures.** Avoid "grip and grin" photos.
- **Watch out for detail.** Be alert to reflections off eyeglasses, for instance. Remember to check the background so objects do not seem to be "growing" out of someone's head; often a slight change in angle will solve the problem.
- **Shoot close-up.** Many photos are spoiled because the subject is too far from the camera.
- **Be sure you have adequate lighting.** Use a flash if necessary. Events held in the school gym or cafeteria are notorious for poor lighting and often produce unusable photos.
- **Set your camera to the highest resolution possible.**
- **Do not imbed photos into a Word document or email message.** Always attach the original .jpg file. Imbedding a photo makes it unusable.