

# PR Ideas that Work

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## Principals/Administration

- Develop a Powerpoint presentation about school to show parents and residents.
- Have a slogan or logo for your district to use with all schools.
- Have a slogan or theme for your school.
- Take a “neighborhood walk” with key parent leaders and/or teachers and students—visit with business and families in the immediate school area.
- Turn your staff and visitors on with your own enthusiasm about your school and district.
- Know what’s going on district-wide and communicate your activities to the other school buildings.
- Publish a building newsletter for parents.
- Have a map of the school for parents and visitors and make sure to include teachers’ names and room numbers.
- Visit the local media and invite them to the school—emphasize the positive! Don’t assume people know.
- Invite the school board, superintendent and community leaders to visit your school and spend time in the classroom with students and teachers.
- Keep in touch with state representatives and congressional delegation. Send them school newsletters and invite them to school activities.
- Communicate in simple language—no “jargon!”



- Help students get noticed in the community by arranging for displays of their art, writing or other work in banks, libraries, hospitals or other public places.
- Return calls and respond to notes promptly—the same day if possible.
- During the school year send “happy grams”—make a phone call, email or send a personal note to share positive news with parents.
- Encourage parents to contact you with questions and/or problems.
- Be positive, enthusiastic and open to ideas.
- Greet students with a friendly hello outside the classroom.
- “Cookies for Rookies” as a weekly after-school gathering for new teachers.
- Plan some special treatment for substitutes so they feel wanted, needed and appreciated. Some schools use a Polaroid or digital camera to take each sub’s picture, put it up in the lounge with a welcome message.

## Teachers

- Help parents prepare for teacher conferences by sending them a summary of the things to be discussed and ask them to prepare a list of questions.
- Self-portraits or pictures of your students on their chairs help parents at open house events.
- Become involved with parents and community through social activities, church, athletic events and/or service clubs and groups.
- Keep parents aware of what is going on in your classroom, especially new or different projects such as extra homework or long-term assignments.
- Communicate in simple language—no “jargon!”
- Be informed about school and district-wide issues.



## Parents

- Provide parent newsletters on a regular schedule. Build in a feedback/question form.
- Have a parent handbook or flyer on topics of critical concern such as discipline, drug abuse, attendance, parent/teacher conferences, district policies and school rules and regulations.
- Invite parents to meet with the principal and teachers throughout the year:
  - o Breakfast Club—for career parents to meet at the school at 7 a.m.
  - o Coffee Talks—meet informally to talk about the school program.
  - o Lunch at the school cafeteria.
  - o After Hours Club—for career parents to meet at the school from 7-9 p.m.
  - o Saturday Work/Rap Sessions—can even include students.
- Curriculum calendar for parents to let them know when specific things are to be taught—fractions, long vowels, division, etc.
- Tip sheet in a newsletter or flier with ways parents can help students learn at home.
- Ask the PTA or PTO to set up a “Welcome Wagon”



for your school to call on new parents and residents.

- During the school year send “happy grams”—make a phone call, email or send a personal note to congratulate parents on their child’s special achievement(s).

## Support Staff

- Include members of the support staff in meetings of the total school staff to address communication plans and exchange ideas—do this on a regular basis.
- Have staff recognition for years of service to the school and to the community.
- Provide human relations training for all staff.
- Provide customer service training for all staff.
- Recognize and utilize the various talents and expertise of all staff—sharing these skills with parents, students and the community.
- Make break rooms for all staff—NOT just teachers.
- Help support staff understand the PR value of their role in the school, district and community.
- Let cafeteria staff develop an orientation for new first grade students.
- Plan a follow-up with school bus drivers after field trips. Let them know how important their contacts are each day with students, parents and community. Ask them to discuss safety on the bus with students, parents and teachers.
- Include support staff in social activities with the whole “school family.”
- Get everyone involved in teacher orientation sessions. Ask the school secretary to describe office procedures. Have the custodian explain cleaning routines.
- Improve the way telephones are answered at your school or office. A “thank you for calling” as a greeting is super. The tone of the voice is very important.
- Invite district office staff out to the school sties at least once a year. It helps them feel their jobs are a vital part of the educational program.
- Put pictures of all the bus drivers on a bulletin board with names in front of the bus they drive.
- Ask students to make banners of appreciation about what a good job custodians and cafeteria employees do.
- Recognize custodians on their birthday.
- Honor secretaries during National Secretaries Week with special activities each day during the week; involve students in the recognition activities.



## Students

- Take time once a month or once a quarter to discuss specific topics of general school concern. Compile ideas and send them to the principal—who can respond in a bulletin or over the intercom at a later date.
- Student recognition—congratulatory message, item placed on bulletin board, certificate, letter home—not only academic recognition but for things done for the school or community.
- Student screening committee for assembly programs.
- Student/Staff Cafeteria Committee for planning the lunch program.
- Elementary activities with secondary schools—tours, bring back former students to tell about the “new school” experience.
- Take a short, simple student attitude survey developed by a joint committee of teachers and students.
- Student/community activities—intern programs, work/study activities, senior citizens, etc.
- “Buddy” system—assign a student to each new student for the first week; have packet of information ready to distribute to each newcomer.
- Student Advisory Council for principal (or superintendent) with representatives from each class (or school) to keep administration aware of student concerns.
- Recognize students on classroom bulletin boards and create a special “You made the News” bulletin board in the main hallway of the school.
- Birthdays in the cafeteria—once a month, have a special table for students at the elementary level who have a birthday that month. Kids get a special treat and get to invite a friend to sit with them at the table. A tree can be posted on the cafeteria wall with all the birthdays that month.



## Board of Education

- Send School Board members:
  - Building newsletters.
  - Notes of appreciation for programs or materials that they have provided to help the school, students and staff.
  - Copies of school materials: calendars, reports



about new programs, handbooks, etc.—prepared for parents.

- Attend board meetings and see about highlighting your school program as part of a board meeting.
- Invite members of the school board to:
  - PTA or PTO meetings to discuss school concerns.
  - Coffee Talks or a Neighborhood Walk.
  - Discuss their roles and responsibilities in your school building and encourage students, parents, staff and the community to attend.
- Distribute summaries of board meetings to all staff the day after the meeting—Board Briefs.

## Community

- Provide realtors in the community with brochures about the school district and arrange tours.
- Identify senior citizens in school areas and invite them to participate as: volunteers, aids, sharing their talents, tutors, helping write newsletters, etc. Invite them to school activities.
- Provide service clubs with speakers about the school program. Invite them to hold their meetings at the school, tour facilities and visit with staff and students.
- Invite neighbors around the school building to attend school affairs and enlist their support as school watchers in anti-vandalism campaigns.
- Invite businesses to adopt a school, provide special projects, aids and support services.
- Provide churches with announcements about school activities for their bulletins—work with the clergy in areas of joint concern. School administration meet once a year with clergy.
- Place the district and school newsletters in business places where groups gather.
- Encourage a two-way flow of communication between schools and the community by using “key communicators.”
- Have an outdoor bulletin board/marquee to “advertise” things that are happening in the school and around the district.



## News Media

- Learn all you can about the news media’s needs, operation, deadlines, services and particularly the reporter and editor covering your district news.
- Know the deadlines and release stories so the media will get it at least one day before the deadline in case they want more information.
- Invite the reporter and editor to school, tour the building and discuss the programs with members of the staff and students. Invite their suggestions about ways you can work together.
- Consistently feed the media ideas for stories about your school program, not just athletic or social events.
- Be positive—tell those good things you and the students are doing.
- Respond promptly to a reporter or editor’s requests for information. Don’t stall them to write a prepared statement unless absolutely necessary.
- Don’t request a retraction of a story you feel is incorrect—rather take a positive approach. Provide the reporter with good information and suggestions of ways you can keep the reporter better informed.
- When a reporter calls, give all your information in a positive and open manner. If you aren’t ready to make a statement when the reporter calls, you can ask to call them back and do so in a timely manner.
- Invite members of the media to serve on a panel at a PTA or PTO meeting and discuss school news coverage.
- Don’t argue with someone who buys ink by the barrel—it is a no win situation!

