

Mind the Message



Until recently, a school did not have to concern itself with a marketing campaign or marketing budget. Most schools have a zone that typically ensures enrollment. However, as school choice comes into play and families have more options available to them, school marketing is becoming more common. Most schools do not have a marketing budget to draw from. So, what exactly can schools do to market themselves?

Get Involved

School leaders must know what the community's perception of the school is. Read the climate surveys, consider the comments, and have an open mind without taking the comments personal. Be open enough to truly consider what your school community is saying. This is easier said than done, I know. And there is always a school community member who will make comments that are more hurtful than helpful, and that are even inaccurate. The phrase to remember is, "You can't please everyone, but you can please the majority." So, ask yourself what the majority is saying.

Social media is another area a school can tackle. Educators get nervous about social media, but the key is to be responsible. A school can have a social media site to post the positive things that are taking place. Social media platforms can be used as communication tools to publicize upcoming event information to your school community. They also can be great forums to respond to questions and

concerns parents may have. Remember, you do not have to respond to everything, and many times you should not. What's important is to know what is being said, and to get the positive information out to your community. A few clicks and your positive school information can reach people everywhere.

Another aspect of social media is to educate your teachers. I don't believe that teachers should be prohibited from having a social media presence, but they must be responsible with it. Teachers should be aware that parents search social media sites to find out about them. Some parents make judgments based on what they read about a teacher on social media, or more specifically what that teacher is posting—pictures and all. So encourage your teachers to be responsible when using social media. Ask them, "What message are you sending about yourself as a person and as a professional when posting on social media sites?" The message they send matters; sometimes they just need to be reminded.

Manage the Message

Principals are a big part of the marketing campaign for schools. What we say about our school in the local grocery store, on our own social media sites, to each other, about each other, to parents, about our students—every bit of this matters. It is the largest marketing campaign a school can launch, and it is critical that the message being sent is an accurate one. Here are some questions that educators should consider:

- Do we have a customer service attitude toward our students and parents?
- Are we invested in our own professional learning so that we are excited about what we do and are teaching our students in the manner they deserve?
- How do we interact with and treat our peers?
- Are we supportive and invested in our school community?
- Are we positive about what we do? Do we love what we do?
- Does our school community know that we are invested in our students and their success?
- Are we listening to what our school and community are saying?

If you truly reflect on the answers to the questions above and are cognizant of the impression you give others about what you do, then you have the ability to affect your school marketing campaign in a positive manner. No longer is the zoned school the only option for families. Parents have a right to choose where they send their children. Don't you want your school to be a top choice in your area? What is the marketing message you are sending about your school? Is it positive or does it need some tweaking? Remember, every teacher and employee of a school is a walking advertisement for their school. What does your advertisement say? 

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