

June/July 2021

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

Feature your teachers (and staff) in your content plan

The expectation — the hope — is that students will be back in school buildings with their teachers this fall. After the disruption of the pandemic, staff reintroductions may be in order.

School and district staff bring a wide variety of excellent qualifications to their positions. Personalizing them as individuals helps engage the public and build connections. A great way to highlight the good work of employees and build trust with parents and community members is to share a few details about the people who work in school buildings.

Make a plan for teacher (and staff) features

Summer is a great time to plan your content for the coming year. When you plan your content calendar for the new school year, consider including staff feature articles. They don't have to be excessively time-intensive, and they can be a great content source for a robust communications plan for the whole year.

New information and consistent content are essential for your digital media. Staff features are a great way to build awareness about your schools, engage your parents and create a library of content for your content needs. Add staff features to your school and district websites, social media channels, e-newsletters or printed newsletters.

Find the stories

An efficient way to manage these features is to have staff send in the details. Identify representative staff to highlight, send out an open call for volunteer submissions, or set up a nomination process. You could also consider sending questionnaires to all staff.

With their help, you can easily share insight into their personal side and what inspires them, providing a peek behind the scenes of your schools. Use it for your administrators and board members, too. They don't need to write it up. They will answer a few questions, and you can write it.

These features can be used on your website or in one-page hand-outs that you can display in the district office or classroom during parent/teacher conferences. You could also create trading cards or bookmarks. Be sure to include a photo in whatever format you choose. Your interview subjects will feel like local celebrities.

Start with a template

Create a form for staff, and then check in with them for more details, if necessary. Be sure

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to edit for grammar and readability. You don't want mistakes to reflect poorly on this staff member or your schools.

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The template is intended to evoke personal, professional, inspiring and funny information.

Make it easy to encourage staff participation. The example below shows how simple this can be. Respondents don't have to answer all questions. Any new information gives a personal, likable glimpse.

Sample Q & A

Name: Michael Garcia

Years I've been teaching: 15, and I hope many more.

Where I grew up: New Mexico on a horse ranch, but we moved into town later when we had to sell the ranch and mom needed to find work.

Hobby or hobbies: Hiking and reading books with my kids. Raising our puppy. And soccer!

Career background (college, degrees, specialty, where I've taught): Master's in Teaching, _____ State University, 1996. Started with _____ School District in 1998.

Favorite foods: Anything my mom used to cook! Seriously, but I love apple pie.

Something funny I may have done as a child: I buried my little sister's Barbie doll in the back yard, but at the time that wasn't funny, so I dug it up and gave it back as a birthday present. Hey, I was only four!

My favorite saying or quote: It's all good.

Book(s) on my nightstand: *Chaser*: Unlocking the Genius of a dog who knows 1,000 words

Why I love teaching: I am truly inspired by, and in awe of, the kids I get to teach every day. If I can help just one child succeed, I know my work really matters.

Something people would be surprised to know about me: I dropped out of high school because I needed a job to support my mom and little sisters when dad died. But I came back and graduated. Also, my mom grew up in Ireland.

One special moment that showed me "it was all worth it" to become a teacher: *Hint: It doesn't have to be a big thing....maybe the fact that one of your students got into the college they wanted.*

I caught one of my students bragging about the book he was reading "just for fun."

Something I've learned in the past year: Don't get sidetracked by failure; use what you learned. Mistakes are never wasted unless you forget you made them.

The best way to reach me: My work email is _____. I check it every afternoon. You can always call the school office to reach me in an emergency at _____ or direct message me at (social media handle).

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Examples:

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Crook County School District

www.crookcountyschools.org/?s=teacher+spotlight

Greenville County Schools (video)

<https://greenville.k12.sc.us/it/spotlight.html>

Lake Nona High School News (written by a student)

<https://lnhsnews.com/7556/student-life/teacher-spotlight-24-question-with-mr-arroyo/>

Round Rock ISD

<https://walsh.roundrockisd.org/teacher-spotlight/>

Contributed by Shannon Priem, APR, former public information director for the Oregon School Boards Association