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ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

What should you put in your newsletters?

Newsletters traditionally have played an important role in helping schools communicate with parents. But are newsletters still relevant when schools have so many other communication tools at their disposal?

The answer is a resounding yes!

Newsletters are an essential tool in keeping parents informed about their school — upcoming events, information about field trips, school championships, clubs, new programs and more. They help keep parents engaged in what’s going on and also build positive relationships.

Unlike websites, where parents have to go looking for information that is often on different pages, newsletters deliver the news in one concise package, right to the parents’ inbox.

The printed newsletters of years past have given way to electronic versions that are easier and quicker to produce. But they still fill the same role, delivering useful information on a regular schedule, so parents can count on them as a consistent source of information.

Electronic newsletters can be as simple or as elaborate as you have the time and staff to produce. Some schools create a newsletter that is essentially an email with a bulleted list of items. Others use free or paid templates to create more visual appeal. The most important point is that the newsletter is useful, relevant and timely.

Whatever design is used, it’s important that the format works well on mobile devices. Smartphones have turned into the main device that parents use to check email. In 2021, about 85 percent of U.S. adults own a smartphone, according to the Pew Research Institute, and the rate rises to 95 percent for those ages 30-49. The rate remains high across all income levels. For about one-fourth of Americans earning less than \$30,000 per year, their smartphone is their only access to the internet.

Some schools produce weekly newsletters; others do it monthly. Sometimes schools hesitate to send a weekly newsletter because they don’t always have a lot to share. But shorter newsletters aren’t a bad thing. Readers are far more likely to read a one- or two-minute long email each week than a 10-minute read once a month. Commit to a regular schedule where the newsletter is sent on the same day each week, so parents know when to expect it. When parents know when to expect your content, they will look for it.

So what type of information should you include?

1. **Upcoming events.** Nothing is more irritating to a parent than to find out after the fact about an event that they might have wanted to attend, such as a field trip or school play or musical. Let them know the details of upcoming events, including time and place and where to buy tickets (if needed).

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2. **News about important changes.** Are you adding a new program? Or eliminating an after-school activity? Is the school moving to a new bell schedule? These are things parents care deeply about and want to know about before they happen. Don't wait until the changes are implemented to let parents know.
3. **Ask their opinion.** Find out how your parents feel about different issues by including an occasional survey in your newsletter. You can create the survey in Google or another platform and include the link in your newsletter. Not only is it a way to learn important information, but it also makes your parents feel like they have a voice in the decisions that affect their school and their children.
4. **Kudos and celebrations.** Share your good news! Let parents know when a student or staff member wins an award. Share the link when the school or student or staff member are featured in a newspaper article. Parents love knowing that good things are happening in their school, and it gives them a sense of pride.
5. **Staff profiles.** Profile a different staff member in every issue by writing a short article about them. Include information such as how long they've been at the school, where they attended college and what they like about working at your school. If they're open to it, include information about their families and their hobbies. These profiles are a way to recognize staff and also let parents learn more about the people working with their children every day. Be sure to include all staff, including teachers, secretaries, custodians and cooks.
6. **Short articles about classroom activities.** Share news about the interesting ways students are learning. Include short articles about the fifth grade's maker fair and the reading competition that the third grade class is doing. Publish a copy of a cute poem that a fourth grader wrote.
7. **Share information about school projects.** Let parents know if students are collecting canned goods for the local food pantry or plan to honor veterans at a school assembly for Veterans Day. Even if parents aren't directly involved, they like to hear about the positive contributions their students are making.
8. **Trivia questions.** It can be fun and engaging to include trivia questions in each issue. The questions could range from the origin of the school mascot to what year the school was built. By including the questions at the end of the newsletter, you encourage readers to read to the very end.
9. **Student artwork.** Parents enjoy seeing student art creations, so consider featuring a student drawing or other piece of art in each issue. It gives recognition to the student and is enjoyable for parents.

Every school has a different personality and culture, so every school newsletter will have a different look and feel. What's most important is that the content is useful, relevant and easy to read. School newsletters are an essential link to parents and a way to provide valuable insight into what is happening in your school.