Telling Your Story
A Communications Guide for Leaders
# Table of Contents

- **Letter from John Selover** 3
- **Branding 101** 4
  
  *A brand is your identity. More than just your logo, it is the way people see, think and feel about your district and the services you provide. Brands communicate and connect across images, words, people and sounds.*

- **Website** 10
  
  *Your website is your storefront and one of the first places people go for information. This section provides best practices for developing and maintaining a website that is attractive and easy-to-navigate.*

- **Topics** 12
  
  *This section includes suggested communication topics to connect with the community using different channels. Each day good things happen in your schools. These suggested topics serve as starting point to telling your story.*

- **Partners** 14
  
  *Local education services impact every person in the community (parents, students, educators, district support staff, taxpayers and businesses). This section identifies potential partners and how to connect with them.*

- **Earned Media** 15
  
  *Organizations that report news about the school district are key partners to distribute accurate and timely information. Sometimes perceived as a threat, reporters can become one of your best allies. These tools will help you successfully communicate with TV, radio, print and online outlets.*

- **Social Media** 18
  
  *Social media platforms offer a cost-effective way to share information and engage your audience in a two-way conversation. Learn how these tools can expand your reach and ability to connect with the community.*
Events
One of the best ways to communicate with your constituents is through events. It provides an opportunity to personally engage with people to earn their trust and respect. This section teaches you how to use events to promote your brand and plan successfully.

Addendum
- PowerPoint Template
- Color Pallete
- Partner Letter
- Media List
- Advisory
- News Release
- Event Checklist
- Waiver/Photo Release Form
Dear PAEC Members,

Education is the cornerstone for a community’s success. It impacts every facet from safety to economic well-being. I know that each of you recognize how important this work is and I applaud your continued commitment to success.

Communications is a critical and necessary part of delivering high-quality, innovative and cost-effective services. To that end, many rural districts find it difficult to consistently maintain contact with families and constituents given the challenges of the day-to-day operations of running a district. Recognizing this, PAEC partnered with BowStern, a marketing and communications company, to develop a tool kit for use by your school and district staff. These materials are designed to bolster your current communication strategies, reinforce your brand and ease the demands on your staff. We hope you find this tool kit helpful!

As always, I and the PAEC team remain committed to your continued success.

All the best,

John Selover
Executive Director
Branding 101

The name of a product or service is a brand. Once established, brands take on their own identity. In the field of education, most people have preconceived notions because of their personal school experiences. This bias makes establishing your own, unique brand identity even more important.

Each school and school district should develop a brand (tailored in your own local voice) that portrays confidence, professionalism and care for the welfare of students. Your brand is more than just your logo or name, it’s the sum of all pieces that represent you. It’s the visuals, the messaging and the reputation. The following are marketing industry standards for establishing and maintaining a solid brand.

What is your brand?

Everything you present to the public (logo, colors, name, messaging, personal and professional image) makes up your brand as a whole. It lives in the public’s mind based on the pieces they see, hear and experience.

Visuals

The visual representation of your brand is very powerful and often the most memorable. Visuals can either attract or repel a viewer. Use visuals to communicate you are professional, innovative and personable, then those attributes become part of your brand in the public’s mind.

Aim for visual consistency with:
- Logo
- Posters, flyers, handouts (color, font, design)
- Website (color, design, layout, usability)

Develop templates for newsletters, web page layouts, letterhead and other items for each school in your district. School leaders can tailor these with their names, logos or mascots while still keeping a unified look districtwide. The following section guides you through the use of colors and fonts.

Addendum: How to Build a Branded PowerPoint

Fonts

Fonts are the typefaces you use to when communicating with the written word. There are things to consider when choosing a font. Once selected, remember to be consistent and make sure everyone is following the same standards. The following are guidelines to help you select the appropriate font for your message and its delivery.
**Fonts are described as serif or sans-serif. What does that mean?**
Serif means each letter includes an embellishment in the form of a small line; the alternative, sans-serif, is simple and more streamlined. An example of serif would be Times New Roman. Sans-serif does not have details or flourishes. An example would be Arial.

**What are the easiest fonts to read?**
Georgia, Helvetica and Verdana are considered some of the easiest fonts to read. All of these are available on Microsoft Office programs. Beyond easy reading, consider what these fonts say about you. (See logo samples to the right.)

**What fonts portray professional, trustworthy and education-based brands?**
Sans-serif fonts like Futura, Helvetica and Univers portray an image that is serious, classic and mature. For a lighter-weight font, consider Gill Sans. The heavier weights are more playful, so avoid those or use them as complement fonts (for newsletters, invitations, etc.). If you want a serif font, consider variations of Bodoni and Didot. At display (large) sizes, they can be a bit more modern and graphically exciting while remaining austere and elegant.

**How should fonts be paired (copy and headlines)?**
Copy and headline pairings are often serif and sans-serif combinations. Stick with a serif font for long paragraphs of body copy. Our designers recommended Caslon Pro. If that is not available, choose commonly-used serif fonts like Georgia. For headlines, sans-serifs are good. Futura is a geometric sans-serif, and easy to read. Arial and Calibri are also friendly and available on Microsoft Office software. Visit [Fonts.google.com](http://Fonts.google.com) to search fonts and find compatible pairings.
What are some recommendations?

- Limit the number of fonts in a document to less than three. Consistency is more important (i.e. Font One for headers or headlines, Font Two for subheads, Font Three for the body).

- Choose a font family that has a good collection of fonts (extended, italic bold, condensed, etc.) and use the proper bold or italic font.

- Keep general copy (the main text of your documents) between 10 and 12-point font. Posters and flyers be in larger font and easy to read from 10-feet away.

Are there any fonts to avoid?

- Avoid cute, fun, silly or childlike fonts. Stay away from Papyrus, Joker, Curlz and Comic Sans to maintain professionalism.

- Don’t use display fonts (the fun ones or the ones you are using as a headline) for body copy.

- Don’t use script fonts in all caps. These cursive-style fonts are best for formal events like graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serif</th>
<th>Sans-Serif</th>
<th>Fonts to Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Helvetica</td>
<td>Comic Sans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodoni</td>
<td>Verdana</td>
<td>Papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didot</td>
<td>Futura</td>
<td>Curlz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambria</td>
<td>Gill Sans</td>
<td>Joker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times New Roman</td>
<td>Arial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caslon</td>
<td>Calibri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Univers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Color Psychology

Selecting the right colors for your brand depends on a lot of variables: the way colors work together, which colors portray the intended message and what they evoke. Asking these questions help drive consistency in your branding. Do these colors convey what you want with your audience? The following explains the psychology behind color.

Six Tips to Apply Color Psychology

1. Use Color to Direct Attention
Color attracts attention and improves the viewer’s ability to recall information. Leverage the use of color to capitalize on this retention.

2. Use Strong Colors Strategically
When designing materials, use strong and bright colors sparingly, or with neutral background tones. Colors should be bold, not bright (which are hard to read). They should also be common solid colors, not neon (which may appear unprofessional). For example, jewel tones like hunter green and royal blue are bold, rooted in solid colors and not overly bright.

3. Improve Readability with Color
   - The most legible of all color combinations are black on yellow and green on white, followed by red on white.
   - Black on white is the easiest to read on paper and on computer screens.
   - Soft colors (violet, blue and green) are less visible and tend to make objects look smaller and further away. They aren’t as easy to focus on.

4. Enhance Learning and Improve Comprehension
As color connects neuropathways, it activates memory better than verbal or textual cues alone. Studies show that people recall colored images more than the black and white images.

5. Use Colors Based on Meaning
Choose appropriate color tones according to your primary audience. For example, in an academic setting red often means a mistake, but blue, on the other hand, conveys collaboration. Red, orange and yellow create a high-energy, whereas green, blue and violet cultivate a working-together or team mentality.

6. Choose the Right Color Combinations
There is a science to combining color successfully. Some colors complement one another while others contrast.

Addendum: Recommended Color Palettes
Messaging

Messaging is the task of engaging your audience through a dialogue. It includes the things you say, messages on your social media pages, letters home to families, comments in the newspaper, etc. As part of your brand, every touchpoint someone has with your organization will shape their view of you. It’s critical that each touchpoint sends a purposeful message. Reinforce your brand through messaging to tell stories about the district and its value to the community.

What makes your school special?
Specialized career and technical programs, reading initiatives or school academies provide a great branding component. Offering these types of specialized education gives you a leg up on the private or charter schools in your area. Also consider other programs that enhance a student’s experience, such as college prep courses (A.P. or honors classes), outstanding electives (fine arts or music departments), winning athletic programs or unique extracurricular activities.

Who runs the district?
It takes the talents of many people to make a school successful. Bus drivers, crossing guards, educators, support staff, administrative leaders and others each contribute to the overall “story” of your district. Tap into the success of these individuals and highlight their contributions. From interesting life experiences accomplishments, your teams have a story to tell that is professional, knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Words matter.
Choose descriptive words, turn them into your motto or goal for the year and make sure everyone is on the same page. For example, if your motto is “excellence in learning,” it can be a tagline on your letterhead, and office staff can end calls with “have an excellent day!” Gather your teams to reinforce your goals, taglines, mission throughout their interactions with the public.
Brand Tips

*Identify how people see you.*
First establish how people view your brand so you can modify or define it better. Remember, your brand isn’t what you think it is, it’s what the public thinks. To learn more about how people think or feel about the district or a school, host a few small focus groups with key community members. Are you measuring up to what is most important to you, like confidence and trust? Make informed adjustments to your messaging based on the feedback.

*Weave your brand into everything you do to build awareness.*
Use your brand colors in all of your materials, logos on your shirts and key messaging in your emails. Similar to the use of templates this consistency reinforces the colors, look and feel of your brand.

*Be consistent.*
Once you’ve selected a brand, be consistent. Changing your brand every month could confuse your public and lose their interest. The old “marketing rule of seven” doesn’t apply in today’s world. You need more than seven successful touchpoints just to be heard above the clutter. Consistency over time is what builds a brand and makes it stronger.

*Tell your story.*
People connect with brands because of an emotional response. Invite your audience to relate to you by sharing your brand’s history or why you chose a particular goal. Add personal sentiments to your social media posts or local newspaper articles. Sincerity reinforces that you care deeply and want your schools to be successful.

*Review your brand.*
Even established brands routinely evaluate their effectiveness. Think of ways to drive your brand forward and set loftier goals if your meeting your original objectives. Measuring results and reviewing your brand at regular intervals allows you to track your progress and grow your reach.
Website

A website is your storefront to the world. This tool helps visitors quickly and easily find information. Given the amount of content and resources available (or required) from the district and schools you must be thoughtful and organize information strategically.

A great starting point is to learn more about why visitors come to your website. These guiding questions inform what content to include and how to organize it appropriately. (If you don’t know the answers to these questions, it would be to your advantage to do a quick meeting or focus group of your audiences.) Note, these reasons may vary widely between district and school websites.

1. Is it easy for visitors to find what they want?
2. What are the top three pieces of information they search for?
3. If they haven’t found the answer, what is the best way to contact you?

Website Best Practices

- Include contact information (address, phone, fax, email) for the office, educators and staff. Most importantly, make sure this information is accurate, updated and easy-to-find.

- Promote news about current events, upcoming deadlines and proud school moments. Inform visitors by including a regularly updated news page.

- Post an updated school calendar to include all appropriate upcoming events and activities.

- If technology allows, provide an option where you can sync the calendar to cell phones to keep parents organized.

- Include documents and information that visitors find most relevant. Consider the requests from parents, students and community members about activity schedules, forms and policies.

- Routinely update your Frequently Asked Questions page. Take the information you get from inquiries and build on it.

- Use high resolution photos of real people in your schools. Avoid stock photos or clipart. Images of students, staff and events make it more personal and relevant (Addendum: Waiver/Photo Release Form)
• Provide links to your social media platforms. Consider using plugins to update social media feeds on your website. Add principal or superintendent video messages to your website and social media. Video is a dynamic way to engage your audience, which may get more viewership than a message sent via a more traditional way.

• Help your audiences find critical information by providing more than one avenue to get there. Priority on your website should be given to your audience’s most-needed items.

• Most school and district websites have tabs for a school calendar, a parent portal, a student section and an employee platform. Also add tabs for two of the most commonly needed items, lunch (the menu and how to pay) and the bus schedule.
Topics

Take every opportunity to inform the community about common school/district happenings. Some are better suited for the school level (sporting events, academic or science fairs, open house, etc.) while others are appropriate countywide. Be mindful to keep your communications relevant and distributed in the best format (we also identify distribution channels).

District

Include topics impacting all or most schools and would be of interest to community supporters: homecoming/sporting events (especially if a team is going to regionals or state); academic competitions; drama/musical performances; 4H or Florida FFA; ribbon cutting for new campus; teacher appreciation week; districtwide hires, especially those who are new to the area, gives you a chance to talk about their qualifications (administration, principals, etc.); assessment scores (FSA, SAT, third grade, AP, etc.); fundraisers or special events (joint reception with district and local college); superintendent volunteer projects; volunteer recognition; 5Ks/runs done in collaboration with a charity; feature an employee a week (Teacher Tuesday)

Monthly Recognitions (apart from national holidays):

- Teacher of the Year, School-Related Employee of the Year, Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year Program, Volunteer/Mentor Recognition, Dale Hickman Excellent Teacher Program, Best and Brightest, Five Start Schools
- August - Back to School
- September 15 to October 15- Hispanic Heritage Month
- October - National Bullying Prevention Month
- January - Literacy Week, Florida!
- January - First Responders Week
- January - Graduation Rate
- January - National Braille Literacy Month
- February - Black History Month
- February - Career and Technical Education Month
- March - Women’s History Month
- May - National Merit Scholarships
- May - Summer Literacy Challenge
- May - Sunshine State Scholars
- May - Military Appreciation Month
- May - Teacher Appreciation Week
School

Topics specific to school should include special events as well as routine messages (weekly updates): tryouts or application deadlines for clubs or sports; sporting events; academic competitions (science or history fair, spelling bee, brain bowl, AR goals, robotics); homecoming; exam schedules; field days; field trips; call for volunteers/mentors; link to cafeteria menu; students of the week; open house; field day; curriculum night

Channels

After identifying all the great information to share, target the best way to distribute it. The following are suggested distribution channels and recommendations for what to include. Note that all of these can be used in tandem to expand your reach with multiple audiences.

- Email - perfect for weekly updates like school newsletters, menus or recognitions
- News Release - information that merits a broader distribution and interests the community as a whole like local assessment scores or new partnerships
- Social Media - great for day-to-day or immediate information sharing (short, things with visuals like video, safety issues)
- Website - all topics but include updates on the homepage
- SMS/Text Messages - safety concerns, important deadlines, use as needed to maintain urgency
- Local Access Channel - messages from the superintendent, school board members
- Billboards/Advertising - events, athletic or academic competitions, fine art performances or showings
- Signage - take advantage of the car drop off to promote sponsorships or events, thank supporters in/around sports complexes
Partners

Invite businesses, civic clubs, military personnel, volunteer organizations, nonprofits, colleges, and other for projects and events. In many cases, businesses are more than happy to make a donation to a specific program (purchase of books for reading program, training equipment for the athletic team, sending a group of media specialist to an advanced training seminar, etc.). These requests should be very specific in nature with a clear “ask,” be measurable and have a set timeframe.

Potential Partners

- Chamber of Commerce
- Rotary Clubs
- Faith-based organizations
- Small Businesses/franchises* (like Alvin’s Island)
- Large/corporate businesses (Gulf Power, St. Joe)
- Farms/agriculture
- Early Learning Coalition
- CareerSource/workforce board
- Economic Development Council
- Media outlets (TV, radio, newspapers)
- Law Enforcement/First Responders

Potential Asks

Other districtwide topics include: competition for schools reading the most books, try to break a world record, booth/contest at area festival (Goat Day, Seafood Festivals, etc.), cleanup day at the beach/river/lake, art contest to display at city hall or local libraries, cooking competition at local college or restaurant, donation of materials for career and technical education, local business leader as a guest reader at an elementary school, there are endless opportunities.

Addendum: Sample Partner Letter
Earned Media

This term refers to any “earned” (free) news coverage from media outlets in your community. Many of PAEC’s 14 members share overlapping “markets” with particular outlets covering multiple counties. For example, WCTV Channel 6 is the CBS affiliate for Tallahassee and covers more than just Leon County including Gadsden, Liberty, Wakulla, Franklin Jefferson, Madison and Taylor Counties. The same is true for WJHG Channel 7, the NBC affiliate in Panama City. In addition to Bay County, it also reports on Walton, Gulf, Calhoun, Washington, Holmes and Jackson Counties.

News (media) outlets include online websites, daily/weekly newspapers, radio and TV stations, college radio and TV stations, local access broadcast stations operated by municipalities.

The media industry uses several methods to get the “scoop” on a story. As a district or school one of the best ways (to ensure accuracy of reporting) is to issue an “advisory” in advance of an event or announcement and then follow up with a “news release” the day of. This strategy helps outlets plan what for the next day (getting a reporter out to a school) and distributing a news release provides all the necessary information for outlets that couldn’t be there.

In advance of any planned engagement with the media, jot down five to 10 talking points. This includes pertinent information you want the audience to understand as well as appropriate responses to questions or criticisms. Review these in detail. Having a prepared speech or message points to address a crowd is expected. However, reading from talking points in an interview could send the message you aren’t prepared or understand the topic completely.

Also, make the best person available for questions. The coach or curriculum specialist may be the expert on a particular topic. Prepare them in advance so they appear natural and confident.

Addendum: Panhandle Media List

Addendum: Sample Advisory and News Release
On-Camera (TV Interviews)

On-camera interviews are a great opportunity to humanize the work of your school or district. Every time you replace the institution and with a real person, you confirm your personal investment to the community.

10 Tips for On-Camera Success

1. Get Information in Advance
   Familiarize yourself with the interviewer and their program/outlet. Request a list of questions in advance (some interviewers won’t comply readily, push them). Some reporters may have angled stories on the subject matter from previous stories (do your homework) so you can anticipate biased questions.

2. Dress to Impress
   On-camera, make sure to wear appropriate clothing for the image you want to convey. Don’t wear a tie or a blazer if you want to look more casual. Dress it up if you want to look more authoritative (like after a school safety issue). Avoid stripes. Thin stripes on a shirt or tie create a distorted visual effect.

3. Keep Water Nearby
   Take a bottle of water with you before addressing a crowd (where you may be filmed) or before a planned interview.

4. Make Eye Contact
   In a typical interview, you will look at the interviewer. But in some situations you will want to maintain eye contact to properly convey your message and build credibility with your audience.

5. Watch Body Language
   Try not to fidget or make too many hand gestures. Be engaging and sincere, leaning in to show the topic is important.

6. Facial Expressions Count
   Make sure your facial expressions match your content. While smiles and lively eyes are recommended, some content requires a more serious tone.

7. Speak from the Heart
   This is your spotlight. Don’t be afraid to branch off your outline and provide examples or anecdotes if your gut is telling you to try a new approach. Don’t ramble, but know you have the freedom to slightly adjust if the moment calls for it.

8. Watch Your Pace
   While you want to be high energy in your interview, don’t race through your content. Pause to breathe, especially after important points. This will also allow the editing team, if it’s a taped interview, to splice your remarks correctly. Everything is about the sound bite!
9. **Practice**
   The best preparation for being on video is practice. Do a couple dry runs in front of the mirror in advance of the shoot to ensure you have a good flow of content and relaxed demeanor. Or practice on camera, even on your phone. Then watch yourself to really get a sense of your performance.

10. **Let your Passion Shine**
    A good interview is like a conversation—if it’s too rehearsed, it will feel fake and unnatural. People love to hear anecdotes, so be a storyteller and avoid spewing facts alone. It will make you more memorable and likable.
We define social media as a platform or application used to connect and engage our audience in a conversation. For districts and schools this includes business owners, families, educators, elected officials and law enforcement (just about everyone). “Posting” or “sharing” is free. Like most communication tools success comes with accurate, consistent sharing of information. Districts and their schools should use social media two-three times per week to inform the community.

YouTube, a website platform for video sharing that allows people to comment or react to content. Video is incredibly popular not just with young audiences but all ages. Consider how you can leverage your educators by taping a lesson or a how-to tutorial on “new math.”

Following are several popular social media platforms. Each offers a unique way to share your messages (stories) with words and images.
Facebook

One of the earliest social media platforms, Facebook is a social networking website and service where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content, play games, chat, and stream live video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person. In the U.S. there are more than 214 million Facebook users 100.7 million are between the ages or 25 and 44.*
Instagram

Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app available on Apple iOS, Android and Windows Phone. People can upload photos or videos to our service and share them with their followers or with a select group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram.
Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. Tweeting is sending short messages (character limit of 140) to anyone who follows you on Twitter, with the hope that your messages are useful and interesting to someone in your audience. It is a rapid form of pushing out information but there is a lot of competition. When something is “trending” (a topic getting discussed and shared in the moment), Twitter serves a real-time ticker of content.
Pinterest

People use Pinterest to discover and save ideas. Ideas can take lots of forms, from recipes to renovation projects to the perfect pair of shoes. Every idea is represented by a “pin” that includes an image, a description and a link back to the image’s source online. When people click a pin’s URL they can find out more about the idea and act on it. This is a great tool for students and/or teachers to share images and ideas for projects.

Events

Whether you’re tabling at a conference or hosting a town hall meeting, events are a great place to showcase your brand and engage your audience. Inviting, colorful displays garner visitor attention and cultivate a personal connection.

Six Steps to Brand Your Event

1. **Set the Tone**
   Titling your event communicates who and why people should attend. The name or tagline should convey your message or mission. The goal is to leave a strong impression so your audience knows what to expect increasing the likelihood of attending.

2. **Use Your Logo and Colors as a Part of Your Décor**
   Consider using your logo as part of your event’s decorations. Incorporating your brand colors ensures your audience identifies you as a host or participant. For example, an event hosted by a Chevrolet dealership will feature gold undertones (like their logo) from the signage to the tablecloths. They will play off their logo and use images of the vehicles. Consider logo placement on:
   - Backdrops
   - Step-and-Repeat
   - Lighting (from color choice to gels with your logo on them)
   - Tablecloths
   - Napkins
   - Balloons
   - Standing banners
   - Exhibits
   - Lanyards or Name Badges

   Brainstorm some out-of-the-box ideas and take your event to the next level. You can brand almost anything, even ice sculptures!

3. **Add Branding to Tasty Treats**
   Foodies will love this creative approach to branding! Put your logo on cupcakes, chocolate candies, cakes, marshmallows, cookies and ice cream. Fortunately, you can brand just about anything edible, even apples, bananas and carrots. (Just use a branded sticker!) To brand beverages consider customized water bottle labels, cups or stir sticks.

4. **Provide Giveaways**
   Smaller promotional items are more obvious branding tools, but they add a nice finishing touch. Below are some tried and true items to have on hand, and also check with your local promotions vendors for a wide variety of options. (Consider inviting an area business to offset costs and offer to include their logo.)
   - T-shirts
   - Pens
   - Notepads
   - Stickers
   - Swag
5. **Create a Successful Event Webpage**
A dedicated page on your website is helpful to direct people who want to learn more. This page also helps media locate details.

6. **Make It Social Media Friendly**
If you have a social media presence, keep expanding it. Likes, shares and hashtags could make your brand stronger. For your events, consider:
- Creating a hashtag
- Using a social media prop or sign to hold in photos
- Taking any photos in front of branded backgrounds
- Doing a live social feed as the event is taking place
- Uploading graphics, talking points or highlights during the event or presentation
- Thanking sponsors or community partners
- Posting a wrap-up photos album or thank you at the end of the event

---

**Town Halls**

Community forums are a productive way for schools or districts to engage parents and community members about policy topics, current events and important district issues. A town hall provides the opportunity for a multi-faceted event. Unlike speeches, conferences or press conferences, public forums allow organizers to both set the tone and receive feedback. The key to planning your town hall is determining the format of your meeting so you best accomplish your goals and communicate your message.

**Panel**
One of the most common formats for a town hall is a briefing by a panel of three or four people and a moderator. The panel discussion typically lasts one hour, and the question and answer period usually lasts 30 minutes. Policymakers and the general public are the primary audience for this type of town hall, but it would also be engaging to try this with students. If the format allows students to have representation on the panel, it may create a deeper sense of loyalty and trust from an often overlooked, but critical, audience.

**Listening Session**
Another format option is a policy panel. In this format, the public presents their opinions to a panel of community leaders. Speakers from the audience give their accounts and urge the panelists to adopt certain measures for recommendations. In this format, leaders can convene after the meeting and issue its findings, or they can make recommendations based on what they learned.

**Media Roundtable**
A media roundtable provides a vibrant discussion with the media as the engaged audience rather than the general public. This format would typically include two to four panelists who bring different viewpoints to an issue. They have a moderated discussion designed to highlight the issue and then take questions from reporters. A small setting such as an office conference room or a classroom are the best environments for media roundtables.
Public Speaking

As a district official or principal, public speaking may be a daily part of your job. However, speeches or commentary for major events, town halls or media interviews require in-depth preparation. Brush up on some public speaking best practices and prepare your remarks ahead of time. The goal is to tell your story, get your message across and continue to brand your organization as professional and trustworthy.

Public Speaking Best Practices

1. **Speak with an intent to move people to action.** What do you want people to do, feel or think after you are done speaking? This needs to be top of mind as your move into preparing your words. Know how you want your audience to react to your speech. Always give your audience something to take home.

2. **Tell a story.** A personal story is something that can grab your audience’s attention and open their minds to your message. It’s also a tactic that humanizes you as a speaker and creates a connection with your listeners. Use storytelling wisely, weaving your message into it and bringing your audience back to your goal.

3. **Structure your material.** Three sections are standard: introduction, body, closing. To further engage your audience, begin with a story introduction and close with your call to action.

4. **Practice. Practice. Practice.** Rehearse out loud with all the equipment you plan to use. Work to control filler words. Practice, pause and breathe. Use a clock to check your timing and allow time for the unexpected. Practice in front of a small audience such as friends or coworkers.

5. **Know the audience.** Try to speak to a few people in the audience as they arrive. They will be your allies in the audience. It is easier to speak to and make eye contact with friends than strangers.

6. **Practice your nonverbal communication.** What you do, your posture, walk and hand placement, say as much as your words. Walking to the podium, sitting in a panel or using your hands to speak should all be purposeful. Be aware of how you will be seen and how you will present your body.

7. **Pause!** Include three-five second pauses at key moments – just before key statements or after a story. This tactic brings the audience into the speech and has a powerful effect on people as you engage their listening skills.

8. **Don’t panic.** If you stumble, keep going. If the slides aren’t working or you drop note cards, crack a joke. Chances are the audience probably never noticed your mistake or they don’t mind.
9. **Smile or use a good “listening face.”**
   Look like the content matters to you – if the audience doesn’t feel that it is important to you, it will be hard for them to feel that it should be important for them.

10. **Use humor and effective language.**
    Inject a funny anecdote in your presentation and you will certainly grab your audience’s attention. Audiences generally like a personal touch in a speech. Let your personality shine through!
Addendum

- PowerPoint Template
- Color Pallete
- Partner Letter
- Media List
- Advisory
- News Release
- Social Media Posts
- Event Checklist
- Waiver/Photo Release Form
Build a Microsoft PowerPoint

Once you have decided on a brand and color palette, set these them as your design template in your Microsoft Office software. Setting one look for the entire organization to follow will ensure your team’s documents and presentations are consistently on brand. Below are step-by-step instructions to set your brand’s color scheme into PowerPoint. Note, because Microsoft Office has this same process for all of its programs, these same rules apply to Word as well.

1. Select the Design tab from the toolbar on the top left of your screen.

2. Select a design option below. Once selected, the theme will apply to all your slides. The arrow to the right will display more template options to choose from.
3. Once you select a theme, you can vary the color scheme by selecting the options to the left of the design selections. For example, if you don't like the original green color, you can select purple instead without changing the layout.

4. For more options, hover over color option and select a different color scheme.
5. If you want to revert to the white background, go back to the **design** tab in the top toolbar and select the “original” option. It will be the second option at the beginning of the design template icons, where you first picked the template style.
If you would like to add color to your slides without adding a design:

1. Right click the slide and select “format background.”

2. The Format Background box appears on the right side of your screen.
3. For a solid background, check the **solid fill button**. To choose a color, select the paint bucket icon. Once you pick a color it will apply to the first slide only. Select the “**Apply to All**” button at the bottom of the box to make all your slides the selected color.

4. If you do not want a solid fill, you can also select the **gradient fill option**.
Save your template:

1. Go to the design tab in the toolbar and hover over the template icons. A downward arrow will appear. Click that arrow.

2. At the bottom of the box, select “save current theme.” The save box will appear. Name the file and PowerPoint will automatically create a “Themes” folder for you.
3. If you saved your custom template to the “Themes” folder, access it for future use in the same folder. Find it by going to the **design** tab, hovering over the template icons and selecting the **downward arrow**. Your template is now under a new row named “custom.”
Sample Partner Letter

Dear _____insert business leader/executive director/president name______,

As a ____insert local business leader/executive director/president______ of ___insert business name or entity____ you understand how valuable a high-quality and innovative educational program is to the well-being of our community. How do we achieve this? Through partnerships with leaders like you.

Ask:
- Financial support (identify what the money will be used for and the publicity it will bring to the business
- Endorsement or show of public support of the school district (at an event, chamber meeting, economic development council meeting)
- Provide materials/staff/support for a particular program (robotics, sports, etc.)
- Or others…

We appreciate your continued investment in the students, educators and support staff of ___insert city/county name____.

Sincerely,

Marianne Arbulu
Superintendent
Jefferson County
Media List: Panhandle Area Education Consortium

Calhoun County
Calhoun Liberty Journal
11493 Northwest Summers Road
Bristol, FL 32321
(850) 643-3333
thejournal@fairpoint.net
Editor: Teresa Eubanks
cljnews.com@gmail.com

The County Record
20311 Central Avenue West
Blountstown, FL 32424
(850) 674-5041
editor@thecountyrecord.net
News Editor: Scott Stephens
scott@thecountyrecord.net

FAMU DRS/Leon County
Tallahassee Democrat
277 North Magnolia Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 599-2100
askerritt@tallahassee.com
News Director: Jennifer Portman
jportman@tallahassee.com

Capital Outlook
1363 East Tennessee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32308
(850) 877-0105
info@capitaloutlook.com

Editor/Publisher: R.B. Holmes
rbholmes1@capitaloutlook.com

WCTV – TV
1801 Halstead Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32309
(850) 893-6666
news@wctv.tv
News Director: Jeff Schlesser
jeff.schlesser@wctv.tv

Franklin County
Apalachicola Times
129 Commerce Street
Apalachicola, FL 32320
(850) 653-8868
Editor: David Adlerstein
dadlerstein@starfl.com

The Port Saint Joe Star
135 West Highway 98
Port Saint Joe, FL 32456
(850) 227-1278
Editor: Tim Croft
tcroft@starfl.com

Gadsden County
The Gadsden County Times
112 East Washington Street
Quincy, FL 32351
(850) 627-7649
Editor: Cheri Harris
editor@gadcoetimes.com

11493 Northwest Summers Road
Bristol, FL 32321
(850) 643-3333
thejournal@fairpoint.net
Editor: Teresa Eubanks
cljnews.com@gmail.com

Havana Herald
103 West 7th Avenue
Havana, FL 32333
(850) 539-6586
nick@havanaherald.net
Editor: Byron Spires
byron@havanaherald.net

Twin City News
314 West Washington Street
Chattahoochee, FL 32324
(850) 663-2255
Editor: Kathy Johnson
tcnews@fairpoint.net

WTXL – TV
1620 Commerce Boulevard
Midway, FL 32343
(850) 894-0397
News Director: M. David Lee III
abc27news@wtxl.tv
Gulf County
*Apalachicola Times*
129 Commerce Street
Apalachicola, FL 32320
(850) 653-8868
Editor: David Adlerstein
dadlerstein@starfl.com

The Port Saint Joe Star
135 West Highway 98
Port Saint Joe, FL 32456
(850) 227-1278
Editor: Tim Croft
tcroft@starfl.com

Panama City News Herald
501 West 11th Street
Panama City, FL 32401
(850) 747-5000
pcnhnews@pcnh.com
Managing Editor: Will Glover
wglover@pcnh.com

WJHG – TV
8195 Front Beach Road
Panama City, FL 32408
(850) 234-7777
news@wjhg.com
News Director: Donna Bell
donna.bell@wjhg.com

WMBB – TV
613 Harrison Avenue
Panama City, FL 32401
(850) 769-2313
news@wmbb.com
News Director: Tom Lewis
tlewis@wmbb.com

Chipley Bugle
P. O. Box 612
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-2545
webmaster@chipleybugle.com
Editor: Beth Centeno
webmaster@chipleybugle.com

Holmes County
Chipley Bugle
P. O. Box 612
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-2545
webmaster@chipleybugle.com
Editor: Beth Centeno
webmaster@chipleybugle.com

Inside Walton
27 S. 7th Street
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
(850) 520-5059
News@InsideWalton.com
Editor: C. Kevin Chilcutt
Editor@InsideWalton.com

The Graceville News
1004 10th Avenue
Graceville, FL 32440
(850) 263-6015
gvnews@wfeca.net
Editor: Sharon Taylor
gvnews@wfeca.net

Washington County News
1364 North Railroad Avenue
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-0212
news@chipleypaper.com
Editor: Carol Wyatt
cwyatt@chipleypaper.com

The Bay Beacon
1181 East John Sims Parkway
Niceville, FL 32578
(850) 678-1080
info@baybeacon.com
Publisher: Stephen Kent
info@baybeacon.com

The DeFuniak Herald
P.O. Box 1546
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
(850) 892-3232
bruce@defuniakherald.com
Editor: Bruce Collier
bruce@defuniakherald.com
The Seaside Times
P.O. Box 4730
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
(850) 387-6822
Editor: Wendy Dixon
ditor@thesasidetimes.com

Jackson County
Chipley Bugle
P. O. Box 612
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-2545
webmaster@chipleybugle.com
Editor: Beth Centeno
webmaster@chipleybugle.com

Jackson County Floridan
4403 Constitution Lane
Marianna, FL 32448
(850) 482-4478
editorial@jcfloridan.com
News Reporter: Deborah Buckalter
dbuckalter@jcfloridan.com

Jackson County Times
2866 Madison Street
Marianna, FL 32448
(850) 526-1501
editor@jacksoncountytimes.net
Managing Editor: Shelia Mader
shelia@jacksoncountytimes.net

The Graceville News
1004 10th Avenue
Graceville, FL 32440
(850) 263-6015
Editor: Sharon Taylor
gvnews@wfeca.net

Twin City News
314 West Washington Street
Chattahoochee, FL 32324
(850) 663-2255
Editor: Kathy Johnson
tcnews@fairpoint.net

Washington County News
1364 North Railroad Avenue
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-0212
news@chipleypaper.com
Editor: Carol Wyatt
cwyatt@chipleypaper.com

Jefferson County
Madison County Carrier
P.O. Drawer 772
Madison, FL 32341
(850) 973-4141
news@greenepublishing.com
Reporter: Selena Iglesias
selina@greenepublishing.com

Perry News – Herald / Taco Times
123 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 888
Perry, FL 32348
(850) 584-5513
newsdesk@perrynewspapers.com
Managing Editor: Angela Castelucci
newsdesk@perrynewspapers.com

The Wakulla News
P.O. Box 307
Crawfordville, FL 32326
(850) 926-7102
editor@thewakullanews.net
Editor: William Snowden
wsnowden@thewakullane.ws.net

Liberty County
The County Record
20311 Central Avenue West
Blountstown, FL 32424
(850) 674-5041
editor@thecountyrecord.net
News Editor: Scott Stephens
scott@thecountyrecord.net
The Gadsden County Times
112 East Washington Street
Quincy, FL 32351
(850) 627-7649
Editor: Cheri Harris
editor@gadcotimes.com

The Wakulla News
P.O. Box 307
Crawfordville, FL 32326
(850) 926-7102
editor@thewakullanews.net
Editor: William Snowden
wsnowden@thewakullanews.ws.net

Wakulla County
The Wakulla News
P.O. Box 307
Crawfordville, FL 32326
(850) 926-7102
editor@thewakullanews.net
Editor: William Snowden
wsnowden@thewakullanews.ws.net

Walton County
Crestview News Bulletin
638 North Ferdon Boulevard
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 315-4301
news@crestviewbulletin.com
Editor: Thomas Boni
tboni@crestviewbulletin.com

Inside Walton
27 S. 7th Street
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
(850) 620-5059
News@InsideWalton.com
Editor: C. Kevin Chilcutt
Editor@InsideWalton.com

Taylor County
Perry News – Herald / Taco Times
123 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 888
Perry, FL 32348
(850) 584-5513
Managing Editor: Angela Castelucci
newsdesk@perrynewspapers.com

Northwest Florida Daily News – Crestview Bureau
1099 South Ferdon Boulevard
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 682-6524
news@nwfdailynews.com
Editor: Jason Blakeney
jblakeney@nwfdailynews.com

The Bay Beacon
1181 East John Sims Parkway
Niceville, FL 32578
(850) 678-1080
Publisher: Stephen Kent
info@baybeacon.com

The Defuniak Herald / The Beach Breeze
P.O. Box 1546
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
(850) 892-3232
bruce@defuniakherald.com
Editor: Bruce Collier
bruce@defuniakherald.com

The Seaside Times
P.O. Box 4730
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
(850) 387-6822
editor@theseasidetimes.com
Editor: Wendy Dixon
editor@theseasidetimes.com
Chipola Ford to Donate Trucks
Local car dealership donates four used vehicles to Jackson County School District
[attention-grabbing headline, tease out what will happen at the event]

WHAT: Chipola Ford, a longtime partner of the Jackson County School District, will donate four trucks to Cottondale, Graceville, Marianna and Sneads High Schools for their continued education in automotive...

WHEN: 10 a.m. (CST) [stands for Central Standard Time; important to include since some media outlets may forget about the time difference; choose a time that gives media time to arrive and after school drop-off]

WHERE: Graceville High School
Flagpole [specific area/where media should go]
5539 Brown Street
Graceville, FL 32440
[include any directions like “media should go to front office for security check in”]

WHO: Superintendent Larry Moore, Jackson County
Will Rogers, President and General Manager, Chipola Ford
[other partners attending who have a speaking role]

CONTACT: Cathy Schroeder [whoever you feel comfortable talking to the media] at (850) 363-9990

###
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT: Cathy Schroeder [whoever you feel comfortable talking to the media] at (850) 363 9990
March 15, 2018

Franklin County Students Turn Up the Heat
Local culinary students challenge and beat seasoned pros during St. George Island Chili Cook-off
[attention-grabbing headline, sub heading with details]

St. George Island [location] - Franklin County High School culinary students laid down the gauntlet to take on some of the Southeast’s greatest cooks during the St. George Island’s 36th Annual Chili Cook-off. This year, Franklin’s Fired Up, a team of Franklin County high school culinary students took home the coveted prize… [highlights and most important information in first paragraph]

“These students made our district incredibly proud today…,” said Superintendent Tracy Moses, Franklin County School District. “By working together as a team…” [attribute quote to the highest-ranking person, the local superintendent]

Hosted every spring, the event raises money for the St. George Volunteer Fire Department. This year, teams from 20 states traveled to compete but proved no match for the Franklin’s Fired Up team: Cathy Schroeder, senior; Emeril Lagasse, junior,…[supporting details]

“All of us have our sights set on becoming great chefs…,” said Lagasse. “We worked on this recipe for months…” [quote from someone impacted by the event]

The team is part of the district’s Career and Technical Education … [supporting details]

May include another quote from volunteer fire department or just finish with boilerplate.

Franklin County School District has …details about the district, number of students, mission, vision, etc. To learn more visit www.FranklinCountySchools.org.

###
Event Planning Checklist

Event planning, from town halls to celebrations, is more manageable by organizing tasks into a checklist. Ideally start planning four to six-months in advance. The checklist below is based on two months, considering a school or district’s timeframe is often more condensed.

First Level Planning

- Establish event goals and objectives
- Select date
- Identify venue
- Get cost estimates (e.g., room rental, food and beverages, equipment, speaker fees, travel, etc.)
- Develop a budget
- Create and launch marketing plan and brand your event (ensure staff and/or volunteers are identified to manage specific tasks – e.g., media relations, VIP coordination, printed material design and printing coordination, signage, online/social media, etc.)
- Identify and confirm speakers/presenters/entertainers
- Identify and contact sponsors/partners
- Determine and arrange all details re: menu, A/V equipment, registration setup, parking, signage, etc.
- Review security needs/plan for the event with venue manager (if applicable)
- Marketing and communications:
  - Develop a draft program
  - Draft event script (e.g., emcee, speaker introductions, thanks, closing, etc.)
  - Develop promotional communications pieces – for example: newsletter articles, newspaper ads, radio spots, blog post submission for other publications
  - Develop and produce invitations, programs, posters, flyers, tickets, etc.
  - Identify target media
  - Prepare a media advisory, news release, fact sheet and all media kit materials
  - Create an event page on your website
  - Enable/create email event notifications (save-the-date email, invitation email or graphicly designed email blast)
  - Create a Facebook event page

Two Months Out

- For speakers/presenters/panelists:
  - Finalize presentation/speech topics
  - Get bio information and photos
  - Travel and accommodation arrangements
  - Have contracts signed if appropriate, etc.
- Venue/logistics planning:
  - Investigate need for any special permits, licenses, insurance, etc.

• Venue/logistics planning:
  - Investigate need for any special permits, licenses, insurance, etc.
• Develop a promo video for YouTube and Facebook
• Add your event on a variety of online event calendars (in local newspapers, magazines, church bulletins, etc.)

One Week Out

• Finalize event script
• Brief any/all hosts, greeters or volunteers about their event duties and timelines
• Set final seating plan, place cards, etc.
• Provide final registration numbers to caterer
• Make print and online copies of any speeches, videos, presentations, etc.
• Check for final registration numbers, name badges and registration list
• Determine photo and interview opportunities with any presenters, VIPs, etc. and confirm details with
• Produce signs (parking, directions, etc.)
• Arrange special accommodations for those with disabilities

Day Before

• Confirm media attending
• Ensure all signage is in place; all promo items, gifts, plaques, trophies, etc. are onsite
• Double-check registration and media tables are prepared and stocked with

necessary items (e.g., blank name badges, paper, pens, tape, stapler, etc.)

Event Day

• Ensure you have copies of all instructions, directions, phone numbers, keys, extra parking permits for VIP guests, seating charts and guest lists with you
• Check-in with support staff to ensure volunteers and teams are on track

Immediately Following

• Balance that budget! Gather all receipts, documentation, final registration data, etc. and update your budget
• Send thank-yous and acknowledgement letters to sponsors, volunteers, speakers and VIPs
• Check in with the media and see if there’s anything else they need, from additional photos to follow-up interviews
• Conduct a post-event survey if you want to learn what people enjoyed about your event and where you have room to improve
• Follow-up event with participants, thank them for coming and promote any ongoing programs or areas where they can support or engage with you further
WAIVER/PHOTO RELEASE

I hereby authorize ____________________________ (insert school name) and/or parties designated by the videographer/photographer (including clients, purchasers, agencies, magazines or their editors) to use my footage for reproduction in any medium the videographer/photographer or his/her designees see fit for purposes of advertising display, audiovisual exhibition, or editorial use in the promotion and advertising of ____________________________ (insert school name) and the (insert school district name).

I affirm I am 18 or older.

Signature: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________

Guardian’s consent (for minors)
I, _________________________, parent/guardian of ____________________________, a minor, assign to __________________________________ ______ (insert school name) and the ____ (insert school district name)____, and its customers and representatives, the exclusive right to copy and reproduce for the purpose of illustration, advertising, and publication in any manner whatsoever any photograph of said minor in its possession.
Signed: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Witness: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________