



Strong **Schools**. Powerful **Partnerships**. Real **Results**.

# School District Storytelling Toolkit

Communications 101 for School and  
District Leaders

You have powerful stories to tell about how community partnerships in your district are making a difference in student outcomes. But those stories only have impact if they're shared – clearly, consistently, and in ways that inspire others to get involved.

This guide will help you capture and share success stories using simple, repeatable steps that anyone can follow, even without a communications background.



# The 4-Part Storytelling Framework

Use these four building blocks for every story you want to tell:

1

## **The Data & Research**

What's the need? What is the problem you are trying to solve. Use numbers, stats, and fact to show why this matters.

2

## **The People**

Put a face to the story – a student, parent, educator, or community partner.

3

## **The Transformation**

What changed because of the program or partnership? Be specific.

4

## **The Call to Action**

Tell your audience exactly what you want them to do next. That call-to-action will be different for each audience.

# Posting to Social Media

## Frequency

Best practices call for 2–3 posts per week. But, that will depend on how many stories you have to share.

## Scheduling

Use tools like Meta Business Suite, Buffer, or Hootsuite to schedule a batch of posts in advance.

## Best Practices

- Keep posts long enough to inspire and inform, but short enough to keep people from scrolling past.
- Include compelling photos or videos – smiling faces, action shots, community interaction. Avoid bored faces, backs of heads, or empty rooms.
- Schedule post for high-traffic times (early morning, lunch, or early evening).
- Tag community partners, schools, and relevant organizations

## Ideal Post/Caption Lengths

### Facebook

Optimal: 40–80 words (about 200–400 characters)

This gives enough space to tell the “who, what, why it matters” and add a call to action.

### Instagram

Optimal: 125 characters before the “See More” cutoff. For longer captions, still lead with a hook in the first sentence. Use the rest for story details and hashtags.

### LinkedIn

Optimal: 25–50 words for quick reads, or up to 150 words for a “story post”. Lead with a strong first line that works as a standalone hook, then provide context and results.

### YouTube

Optimal: 1–2 sentences (150–200 characters) to summarize the story and why to watch.

Include a call to action and relevant links.

## Hashtags

#KentuckyEffect

#GroundswellKY

#PrichardCommittee



# Posting to Social Media

## Facebook Examples

### Example 1 – Homework Diner

When families gather for a Homework Diner, learning isn't just for students. Parents, educators, and volunteers come together over a meal to tackle assignments, build confidence, and strengthen relationships. This is how community partnerships turn school nights into something special.

See this effort in action and learn how you can get involved: [\[Insert Link\]](#)

### Example 2 – After-School Art Program

An after-school art program is sparking creativity and confidence in our students – thanks to [\[local business\]](#) that donates supplies and mentors budding young artists. Together, we're helping kids discover their voices and build even brighter futures.

Watch the story: [\[Insert Link\]](#)

## Instagram Examples

### Example 1 – Homework Diner

Homework, dinner, and community – all in one place. See how we're bringing families and schools together for stronger student outcomes. [\[Link\]](#)

### Example 2 – After-School Art

From blank canvas to bright futures – this art program is inspiring our students. [\[Link\]](#)

## LinkedIn Examples

### Example 1 – Homework Diner

Our Homework Diner brings families, students, educators, and community partners together to learn, eat, and connect. See how partnerships like this improve student success. [\[Link\]](#)

### Example 2 – Homework Diner

Some of the best learning happens outside the classroom – and sometimes over a shared meal. Our Homework Diner invites families, students, and educators to work side-by-side on assignments, ask questions, and get extra support. Local restaurants and volunteers make it possible by donating meals and time, turning an ordinary school night into a community celebration of learning.

Programs like this improve homework completion, build parent confidence, and strengthen the bond between schools and families. See how the Homework Diner is making a measurable difference – and imagine how your organization could be part of the next success story.

[\[Link\]](#)

# How to Capture Good Stories at Events

Your events are more than activities – they're examples of how community partnerships make a difference for students. Capturing those moments effectively means you can share them long after the event is over, turning one afternoon of impact into a story that inspires for months.

## 1. Know What You're Looking For

**Before the event, identify the core story:**

What's the "why" behind the event? (e.g., a homework diner helping parents feel confident supporting their child's learning)

**The people to feature:**

Is there a student, teacher, community partner, or parent whose perspective brings the event to life?

**The results to highlight:**

This could be attendance numbers, improved test scores, or anecdotal evidence like "I finally understand my child's math homework."

## 2. Capture Quotes That Matter

Don't just ask "How's it going?" Guide people with prompts that invite storytelling.

**Examples:**

"What made you want to be part of this program?"

"What's the best thing you've learned here today?"

"How has this program helped your child?"

"Why do you think this is important for our community?"

Record answers with permission. Short, heartfelt quotes can become powerful captions or headlines later.

## 3. Take Impactful Photos

**Get faces, not just groups.** Faces capture emotion; groups show community. Use both.

**Capture action.** Show students solving problems, volunteers serving food, parents talking with teachers – not just posed shots.

**Vary your angles.** Mix close-ups, mid-shots, and wide shots to give variety.

**Check lighting.** Natural light works best; avoid standing directly under harsh overhead lights if possible.

**Consent Reminder:** If students are involved, confirm with school staff whether they have media/photo consent on file before taking or posting any pictures.

## 4. Tell the Story in Stages

**Don't wait until after the event – share throughout the process:**

- **Pre-event teaser:** A short post about what's coming up, why it matters, and who's involved.
- **During event:** Quick snapshots, short quotes, or behind-the-scenes moments to build excitement.
- **Post-event:** A highlight reel – photos, quotes, and measurable outcomes ("Over 50 families joined our first homework diner!").

# Telling Stories in Newsletters and Emails

Newsletters and email blasts are one of the most direct ways to connect with your audience – families, educators, community partners, and local leaders. When done well, they keep your work visible, show progress, and invite action.

## 1. Lead with the Hook

Your subject line and opening sentence are the “doorway” to your story.

**Subject line:** Keep it short (40–50 characters) and specific. Example: “Art Class Turns After School into Inspiration”

**First sentence:** Jump right into the story – skip long intros. Example: “Last Thursday, the gym at Smith Elementary turned into a community art studio.”

## 2. Keep It Short & Focused

Your readers have a tendency to skim the content. Aim for:

- One main story per email or a short digest of 2–3 highlights.
- 150–300 words max for each story – break it into short paragraphs.
- Use bold text for the most important points.

## 3. Use the Data + People + Action Formula

For every story, include:

- Data or fact showing the need or result (“Attendance has increased by 20% since launching our homework diner”).
- Human story – a short quote or anecdote that makes the data real.
- Call to action – what you want the reader to do next (get involved, share, attend).

## 4. Make It Visual

- Include one strong image or graphic at the top – faces and action shots work best.
- Keep file sizes small so emails load quickly.
- Use captions – many people glance at pictures before reading.

## 5. Invite Interaction

End with a clear next step. Examples:

“Sign up for our next community partner day.”

“Share your ideas for our after school programs here.”

“See the full photo gallery from this event.”

## 6. Keep It Consistent

- Whether monthly, bi-weekly, or weekly – choose a frequency you can maintain.
- Use the same template and brand style so your audience recognizes it instantly.

# Storytelling Tactics for Influential Groups

These audiences – chambers of commerce, civic clubs, school boards – are busy, results-driven, and often juggling competing priorities. Your job is to connect the dots between your district's story and their goals.

## 1. Start With the "Why Am I Here?"

Open with a clear, one-sentence purpose. This keeps you from losing your audience in background details.

Examples:

"I'm here today to show you how our after school STEM club is preparing tomorrow's workforce in our own community."

"I want to share how our district is working with local businesses to improve student attendance – and how you can help."

## 2. Follow the "Data + People + Ask" Formula

**Data:** Start with one strong number that proves there's a challenge or an impact. ("Chronic absenteeism dropped by 18% in just one year.")

**People:** Share a short, human story that makes the number real. ("One of our 7th graders told me he's finally excited to come to school because of the art club we started with your help.")

**Ask:** End with a specific action you want them to take. ("We're looking for local professionals to host one-day workshops this spring – will you join us?")

## 3. Keep It Tight

- Aim for 3–5 minutes total.
- Use plain language, no acronyms or jargon.
- Limit slides to 1–3 visuals or go without slides entirely – a single photo or chart can often be more powerful than a deck.

## 4. Make the Call to Action Clear and Relevant

Different groups can help in different ways:

**Chambers & Business Leaders:** Invite them to mentor, host site visits, donate equipment, sponsor events, or provide internships.

**School Boards:** Ask for policy support, funding prioritization, or public recognition of programs.

**Civic Clubs:** Invite them to volunteer, raise money, or spread awareness in their networks.

## 5. Bring a Leave-Behind

Always give them something to remember you by:

- One-page handout with key data, a short student story, and your contact info.
- Link or QR code to a video story or webpage.
- Calendar of upcoming events they can attend.

# Tools & Tips

Here's a breakdown of free or easy-to-use tools that district directors can use to consistently tell their district success stories without needing advanced communications training. They are grouped them by task so it's easy to find what's needed.

## **1. Creating Graphics & Flyers**

Canva – Drag-and-drop design tool with templates for flyers, social media posts, and newsletters.  
Website: [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

## **2. Scheduling & Automating Posts**

- Meta Business Suite – Schedule Facebook and Instagram posts in one place.
- Buffer – Schedule up to 10 posts for multiple platforms.
- Hootsuite – Manage up to 2 social accounts and basic scheduling.

## **3. Video Editing & Captioning**

- iMovie (Free on Apple devices) – Beginner-friendly editing for short videos.
- Canva Video Editor – Edit and export simple videos directly from your browser.

## **4. Caption & Text Writing Help**

ChatGPT – Get help brainstorming captions, headlines, and email text.

### **Tips:**

- Always proofread for accuracy and make sure facts are correct.
- Feed it details for better results.
- Use it for brainstorming, then personalize to your community.

## **5. Email & Newsletter Tools**

Mailchimp – Build and send email newsletters to your list.

# Media Outreach

## **MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE**

Think of this as an invitation for the media to cover your story.

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Date Sent: [Insert Date]

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

[Name]

[Title / Role]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

**HEADLINE:** Short, attention-grabbing, and specific – e.g.,  
“Local Students and Businesses Team Up to Build Brighter Futures”

**WHO:** Key participants – students, educators, community partners, elected officials, community volunteers, etc.

**WHAT:** Brief summary of the event or program, emphasizing the data + story + ask formula:

**Data:** One or two compelling numbers that illustrate the need or progress (e.g., “Reading proficiency has increased by 15% since launching the after school tutoring program”).

**Story:** Humanize it with a short anecdote or description (e.g., “Students like Maria, a 5th grader who once struggled with reading, now look forward to their weekly sessions with volunteer mentors”).

**Ask:** Why it matters to the community or what you want them to support (e.g., “Help us expand this program to reach more students next year”).

**WHEN:** Date & time

**WHERE:** Location, address, parking instructions, entry details

**WHY:** One or two sentences about the bigger purpose – how the program improves student outcomes and strengthens the community.

# Media Outreach

## **PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE**

Best used when announcing results/milestones.

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: [Insert Date]

#### **CONTACT:**

[Name]

[Title / Role]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

**HEADLINE:** Outcome-focused, specific – e.g., “After School Art Program Helps 200 Students Boost Creativity and Confidence”

#### **CITY, STATE:**

**Opening paragraph:** Hook the reader with the data + story + ask. Start with the most newsworthy element (the result, milestone, or compelling need), add a human element, and connect to the bigger impact.]

**Example:** “Last year, [District Name]’s Homework Diner program served more than 3,000 family meals while helping students complete over 5,000 homework assignments. For parents like James Carter, it’s more than dinner – it’s a chance to connect with teachers, get homework help, and spend time together as a family.”

**Background/Context:** 2–3 sentences giving more detail about the problem being addressed and how your district’s initiative is tackling it. Include relevant statistics and research findings.

**Quotes:** Quote about the impact on students or community (from community partner, principal, parent, educator, etc.)

**Call to Action:** Specific action for the reader – “Visit our website to learn more,” “Sign up to get involved,” “Contact your school board to support continued funding,” etc.

**About Your District/Program Name:** 2–3 sentences describing your district or program, its mission, and where to learn more.



# Thank You

Your stories are the heart of this storytelling effort. Every partnership you build, every barrier you help remove, and every moment of connection you create adds to the statewide movement to strengthen Kentucky's schools and communities.

If you have questions, we're here to help.

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