News Release Writing *(NASC Communications Toolkit)*

One of the best and easiest ways to communicate your message to the news media is by issuing a news release. News releases take little time and involve only minimal expense, yet they build support by encouraging ongoing communication. (View sample at end.)

These key steps will assist you in composing a successful news release. Remember, your goal is to gain attention for your story while also demonstrating the value of the story you want to convey to editors and reporters.

1. Grab Attention in the Headline
The best news release headlines are newsy - meaning of interest to readers.
- A quality headline should express a single newsworthy story in eight words or less, so editors and reporters can understand your point at a glance.
- Ensure that your headline answers the question: "What happened?"
- Be sure your verb is strong. The verb - the "what happened" - is the story. It should be the second or third word in the sentence. Don't leave it buried.

2. Sell the Story in the Sub-Head
Once you've gained attention in the headline, use the subhead ,or summary blurb, to sell the story.
- Select a reader benefit, a secondary news angle or an expansion of the headline for the sub-head angle.
- Keep it short. Convey a single point in no more than 14 words. That's a length that's easy for reporters to read and understand.
- Don't repeat words or themes from the headline. Redundancy wastes time reporters don't have.
- Don't leave out the sub-head. This second layer of information is essential to quickly communicating with today's fast-paced news media. It also reduces the temptation to overload the headline.

3. Pull Them in With Your Lead
An attention-grabbing headline and sub-head will convince reporters to read the first paragraph (called the "lead") of your story. Follow these steps to strengthen your lead:
- Answer "What happened?" and "Why should the reader care?" in one or two short sentences. Remember, you don't have to explain everything in the lead. That's what the body of the release is for.
- Don't use the lead to cram in all the facts (the who, what, when, where, why and how) or use the "today announced…" approach. Both methods slow the story down and are too formulaic to stand out from the competition.
- Consider using the lead to strongly illustrate what benefits the reader. Try this formula: "X (i.e., students), who have struggled with Y (i.e., subject matter or issue), will now be able to Z (i.e., what needs to be done by/for them), thanks to A (i.e., what helped them accomplish it). Following this formula will improve your news release by making it more newsworthy and interesting than a traditional announcement release.

4. Tell the Story in the Body
If the reporter has gotten this far, there is no turning back! Here you should use the body of the release to build the story angle you introduced in the lead.
- Your lead should flow logically and seamlessly to create a story that successfully conveys your desired message(s). You don't want to end up with a release that is just a bunch of facts thrown together.
- Don't make abstract claims without backing them up with concrete evidence. Use tangible, quantifiable "proof" - numbers, comparisons, examples and third-party testimonials, for instance.
- Make your news release as long as it needs to be, but not too long. Target 500 words or less, not counting the school or district boilerplate. If your release is much longer than that, consider breaking it into two pieces or creating a fact sheet that offers more in-depth information.

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COMMUNITY CENTER TAKES CENTER STAGE
Community Leaders and <School Name> <Club> Students
Hold Grand Re-opening Ceremony

<City, State> (<Date>) — Demonstrating an outstanding collaboration of community and student leadership, the <Name> Community Center will once again provide a place for members of the community to gather.

The <Name> Community Center has been closed since the devastating fire on <Date>. Constructed in 1918, the center was an integral part of the community and provided a place for recreational classes, day care, dances, meeting rooms, etc. The 2004 fire caused enormous damage and completely shut down the center.

"Last year our community suffered a terrible loss when the fire destroyed the <Name> center," said <Principal/Community Leader> "The <Club> students were instrumental in the renovation and I commend them for their outstanding efforts toward making the community center once again a place for everyone to gather, share, and learn."

Over the past year the <Club> students raised over $20,000 through numerous fundraising efforts in order to purchase supplies to aid in the renovation. After donating the funds, the students rolled up their sleeves and donated hours of free time and worked with members of the community to rebuild and paint the new center.

<Boilerplate: Standard descriptive language that describes your school/district. >

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