

Publicity Tool Kit



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Hi! I'm Jessica Shein, PR Manager for WorldStrides. In my career, I have worked for public, private and nonprofit companies, helping them get local and national publicity!

A travel program for students provides a unique opportunity to bring positive attention to your school, your dance studio, your team, or your community. I have crafted this kit to help you maximize that attention – whether you're aiming to amp up your fundraising efforts or just tell the story of your traveling group! I hope you find these tips, ideas and templates to be helpful along the way.

Introduction

WorldStrides offers tools to assist you every step of the way during the process of planning your program. Publicity is a powerful tool that can help take your planning and fundraising goals and trip to the next level. In this kit, we'll discuss what it can do for you and your students as you prepare for and explore the places you are visiting. Our goal is to get you the most traction and to garner publicity for your trip and your school.

Table of Contents

1. What is Publicity?
2. Crafting Your Pitch
3. How to Write a Press Release
4. Contacting Media
5. Making the Most of Coverage
6. Templates

What is Publicity (and Why Do You Care)?

The most basic definition of publicity is to deliver information to the general public through the media. For any business or campaign, public relations is a vital aspect of marketing for your campaign or fundraising success. It allows you and your students to get the word out FREE OF CHARGE. Let me say that last part one more time for emphasis – FREE OF CHARGE!

What's Newsworthy?

One of the most important practices when trying to garner publicity is knowing what the news is going to cover and what they won't. Here are some questions reporters ask themselves:

- *Is it unusual?* Did something out of the ordinary happen? Is a local representative planning on giving your class a tour on your trip to D.C.? Did you meet a celebrity?
- *Is it interesting or significant?* Did a local athlete or celebrity donate to your trip? Did a student have a life-changing experience while visiting a museum?
- *Is it new?* We have a saying at WorldStrides – stories are like French fries. They are best served fresh and hot! Nobody likes soggy fries, and journalists don't like old news. Make sure you are giving reporters access to your story as it's happening!

Media outlets are likely to be most interested in a few moments during this process of traveling with your student. Look out for unusual or interesting moments related to these:

- The Start - Your invitation to perform at an event or your decision to travel
- Planning: Fundraising and making it happen!
- Departure
- Notable moments while traveling- Like meeting someone of importance or winning an award
- Your return



Crafting Your Pitch

Depending on What You are Pitching, You'll Likely Fit into 1 of these 3 Formats:

Media Alert

Hosting a fundraiser? A media alert invites media to attend your event. Your alert should be a one-page document that provides the 5 Ws of the event. Media alerts are typically sent out one to three days prior to the event.

Community Event Calendars

Do you have 4-6 weeks' notice on your fundraising event? In addition to a media alert, there are lots of local calendars that would be happy to add your event free of charge!

Press Releases

To get publicity for your story, you'll likely want to send a press release. Different than a media alert, a press release contains more complete information. Essentially, you are asking the media to write about your news. Read more below about writing a press release.

Check out some templates on page 8.

The Angle

Now that you've decided what you will present to the media to cover, ask yourself, what's the best way to explain what I want them to take from this?

Example:

Okay: "We are having a fundraiser to raise money for our trip to Washington, D.C."

Anyone can host a fundraiser. What's going to make someone's head turn and want to attend?

Better: "(Insert School Name) will send XX students to (location) on (Day, Month, Year). For many, this trip will be their first out-of-state/country trip and we need the community's help to make it happen!"

Or consider this:

Okay: "Our high school band was selected for the Festival of Gold."

Put yourself in the reader's shoes. What's special about this?

Better: "Practice Makes Perfect! Local high school band selected to perform at world-famous Carnegie Hall."

How to Write a Press Release

A press release should be no more than a page long and cover everything you want your audience to know. Here are some basics of press release writing:

- *Always make sure your final, approved release says “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”.* See the template. This allows your recipient to know that all of the information in it is accurate and ready to be published.
- *Is your title catchy?* Your title will make or break your release. It will most likely be the deciding factor in whether or not your release is read.

The Format:

- **Intro Paragraph – The 5Ws:** We mentioned this before and it’s so important, we’ll mention it again! Your intro paragraph will cover the Who, What, Where, When and Why.
 - > What has happened / is about to happen?
 - > Who is involved?
 - > When did it happen / is it going to happen?
 - > Where did it take place / is going to take place?
 - > Why did it take place / is this happening? What is the bigger picture?
 - **Paragraph Two:** The second paragraph should contain additional information about your school, class and the greater goal.
 - **Paragraph Three:** A quote from a teacher, parent or student.
 - **Paragraph Four:** Conclusion. Make sure to include any websites or phone numbers you would like to include in this paragraph.
 - **Three Hashtags (Pound Sign):** At the end of the text, it is important to place three hashtags at the bottom center of the release. This allows the reader to know that the release is completed.
 - **Media Contact:** Choose who you would like to receive calls or emails regarding media opportunities. See the template.
- Remember:** You are writing this release in the style of news coverage. Take a look at some newspaper articles if you need some stylistic suggestions.



Contacting Media

Now that you have your press materials together, it's important to create a list of where you want your material to go. Here are some ideas:

- Local Newspaper
- Broadcast News
- Radio Stations
- Local Magazines
(must have 4-6 weeks' notice)
- Alternative Newspapers

The next question you may have is “How do I get in touch with these companies?” Though it may take some legwork, it's not as hard as you may imagine! Here are some helpful hints:

- **Tap your connections.** Do you know someone who works in the media? Now's the time to call in a favor. Give them your materials and see if they can work their magic.
- **Send an email.** If you are pitching to broadcast news, you can likely find the email address for their Assignment Desk. The Assignment Desk is the frontline. For newspapers, you are looking for editors. For radio stations, go to the program director and community affairs director. You can also reach out to individual reporters who cover community news, schools, culture, or other relevant topics.

***PRO TIP:** Have a new reporter in town? Send your release and media alert directly to them! The main anchors and senior writers get TONS of story ideas and pitches in their inbox. The new reporters are still trying to make connections.*

- **The power of social media:** Many journalists use social media sites not only as a way to post their work, but as a way to find news stories to report, too. Tag individual reporters in a tweet about your trip or fundraiser. Some journalist will even have their work email addresses on their bios. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are all great tools! You may also want to post your event on local Facebook pages. Many community pages are followed by news reporters who are looking for story ideas.
- **Follow up.** Pick up the phone and say hello. You would be amazed by how many emails are never read until you call and ask if a journalist has received your email. This is also a great way to give them a nudge if they are on the fence about covering your story.
- **Get “continuing coverage”:** If you get newspapers or broadcast television to cover your trip before you go, send them an email prior to your return. Some journalists will send a camera crew or photographer to meet you at the airport when you arrive.



A Word About the Email Subject Line

If there is one thing I cannot stress enough it is the importance of an attention-seeking subject line. Journalists get hundreds of email pitches in their inbox a week. What's going to set your pitch apart from the rest?

Making sure your subject is eye-popping without overhyping your release can be a slippery slope.

Start with the most interesting aspect of your release. If 60 students from your school will be traveling, start with that. If you're traveling to China, go from there. And finally, if you are \$5,000 away from your goal, add it!

Example PITCH:

"60 XXX Middle School students to travel to China in 2018. Only \$5k away from goal."

Timing Tips from a Pro

– Best and worst time to send a release

- > **Best Time:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually the best time to send a press release. With many journalists' deadlines being at the end of the week, you will give yourself the best shot of presenting a reporter with a good story when they are trying to find content.
- > **Worst Time:** Never send a release on a Friday or Monday. Friday mornings are a time when deadlines are due and Friday afternoons are downtime for reporters. Mondays are just that – Mondays. Like most of us, our inboxes are filled from the weekend and it's easy for an email to be overlooked.

– Best time to follow up with a news station

- > **Best Time:** The best time to contact a news station and get your story on their radar is before the morning editorial meetings. Editorial meetings cover stories the team is working on and what is being covered for the day. They normally take place between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- > **Worst Time:** If you are pitching to a news station never send your materials or call to follow up during these times:
 - Before or during a newscast (6 a.m. – 8 a.m. or even 9 a.m., noon and the evening news)
 - Never, never, never call to follow up during breaking news!!!! No reporter will be looking for new content during a breaking news story.

– Best and worst times for your event (if applicable)

- > If you want TV coverage for an event like a fundraiser, look at the time the newscasts are happening. In most cities, resources are most available between 10am-3pm, or if it must be at night, between 6:30pm-7:30pm. Resources are tight in the morning, in the 2 hours just before the evening news, and again in the 2 hours before the late news.

Making the Most of Coverage

If your story is picked up by a local media outlet, make sure you have students, teachers and even parents queued up for a potential interview. Pick people who are well-spoken and aren't camera shy. Practice a little for an interview! While you probably won't receive interview questions in advance, here are some questions that could be asked:

- **For Teachers:** Why did you choose this destination?
Why is this trip important to you?
- **For Students:** What are you looking forward to most about your travel?
- **For Parents:** Why do you feel this trip is important for your son/daughter?

Remember, reporters can and will contact you on a moment's notice. Make sure you know who is going to speak on behalf of your event and be willing to go at the drop of a hat! If a reporter covers your story in the planning process, they may cover it again when you return. Make sure you have parents and students willing to speak upon your return.

Taking the reins and being your own publicist to help create buzz about your trip can be a fun experience. Remember, every media success will result in not only your trip's success, but you will bring attention to your school, your program and your students!



Appendix: Press Release Templates



We've provided all the tricks and tips that you need to succeed in publicizing your program. The links below are press release and media alert templates to put what you've learned into use. Good luck!

General Templates:

[Media Alert](#)

[General Press Release](#)

Honors Performance Series:

[Honors Performance](#)

Onstage Programs:

[Performance Invitation \(Dance/Cheer\)](#)

[Performance Invitation \(Marching Band\)](#)

Excel Programs:

[Competition Press Release](#)

[Excel Fundraising Press Release](#)