



**Arizona Head Start Association
Advocacy and Social Media Toolkit
Fall 2014**

Messaging the Impact of Head Start and the 50 Year Anniversary

- What makes Head Start unique in the field of Early Education that could be highlighted during the anniversary?
- How has Head Start been a leader in serving low-income, at risk children?
- Who needs to hear the Head Start story? Why?
- What negative questions, comments, and opinions might the community have about Head Start that I should be prepared to discuss? How might I response to the criticism?
- What research and/or resources can help me develop a message of Head Start and the Importance of Early Childhood?

Communicating with Elected Officials

- Who are typical staff members of Congress that I may need to engage with to gain access to Congressmen/women?
- What is the best time to reach out to elected official to share information about Head Start?
- What do I need to know about the motivation of elected officials?
- How can I align my message with their priorities?
- What resources will help prepare me to reach out to elected officials?

Engaging with Print and Broadcast Media

- When is the media most likely to engage with a Head Start program?
- What types of responses can I give if the media inquiries about a negative report?
- How can I interest the media in telling positive stories of Head Start?
- Who are the types of people in media that influences coverage?
- What resource can help me learn about working and communicating with media?

Using Social Media

- What is the potential impact that social media has on getting the Head Start message to the public, to consumers, to employees?
- How do I monitor potential negative postings?
- How can I develop engaging postings?
- What skills are needed to have an effective social media approach?
- What resources are available to help me develop a social media campaign or approach?

Supporting Parents as Program Advocates

- What methods of communication can parents have the highest impact to elevate Head Start in a community?
- What ideas and strategies have been successful in using parent voices to promote Early Education?
- What types of training or assistance is helpful in organizing and helping parents positively advocate for Early Education?
- Are their risks in engaging parents in the effort to talk about Head Start? If so, how can they be minimized?
- What resources are available to help me work with parents as advocate?

SAMPLE COMMUNITY AND PROGRAM DATA SHEETS

YOUNG CHILDREN IN TEMPE

The beginning years of a child's life are critical for building the early foundation needed for success in school and later in life. During these years, children's brains are developing rapidly, influenced by the richness of their experience, including day-to-day interactions with their parents and caregivers.

2010, Kidscount.org

8,049

UNDER AGE 5

With disparities between lower- and higher- income children starting as early as 9 months of age, high quality early learning programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are a key ingredient to closing the achievement gap, leveling the playing field, and making sure all of our children have the best odds at success.

2011, Kidscount.org

2011, Kidscount.org

24%

CHILDREN LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL

Young children cared for by adults with higher levels of formal education and specialized training in child development have been found to be more sociable, exhibit more sophisticated use of language, and perform better on cognitive tasks—critical elements of school readiness— than those cared for by less-qualified adults.

2011, Kidscount.org

22%

ANNUAL BIRTHS TO MOTHERS W/O HIGH SCHOOL ED.

Children in high quality early learning programs are less likely to commit crimes or become chronic lawbreakers; more likely to be employed and earn more money; less likely to need public and social supports; more likely to own their own homes and to delay parenting until adulthood.

2011, Kidscount.org

6,993

UNDER AGE 6 WITH WORKING PARENTS

Early care and education benefits a community's economy by promoting and facilitating parents' ability to participate in the paid workforce. Research has found that high-quality and reliable Child Care increases worker productivity and improves businesses' bottom line. Quality early care and education is especially important to the careers and earnings of mothers.

2008, Kidscount.org

1,207

UNDER AGE 18 WITH A DISABILITY

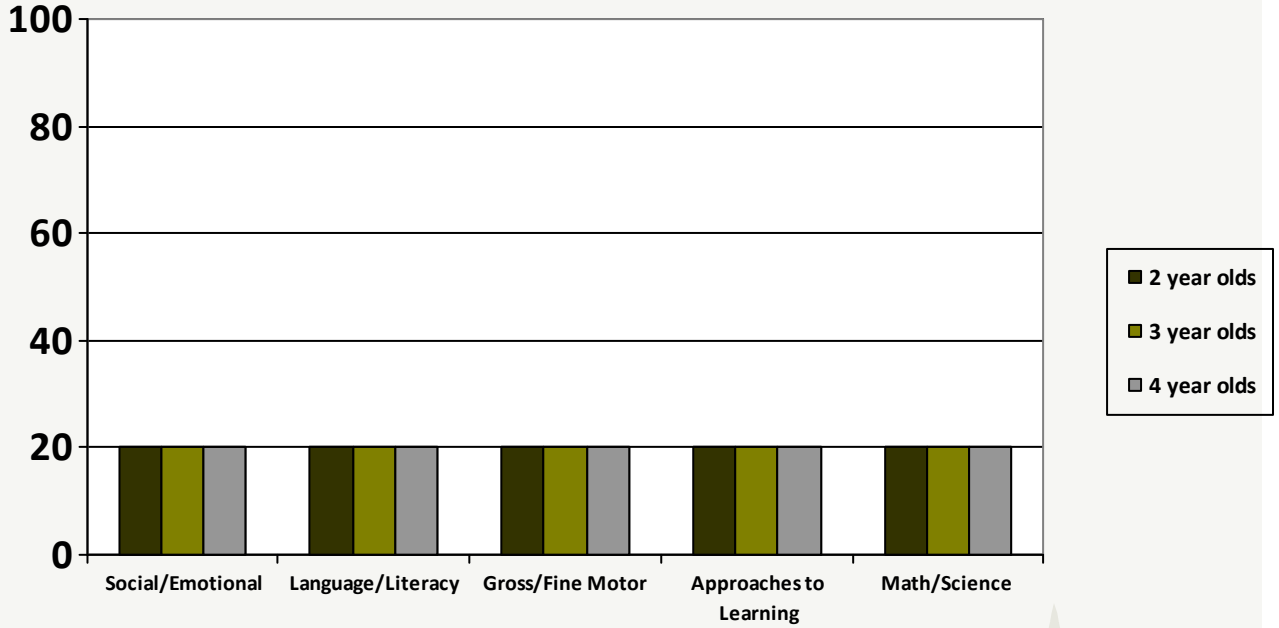
Positive family-program connections have been linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and socio-emotional skills across all young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

37%

3 TO 4 YEAR OLDS ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL

TOLLESON COMMUNITY

MEETING OR EXCEEDING SCHOOL READINESS GOALS-1st Quarter (July- October)



Below 100% Poverty:	Single-Parent:	English Speaking:
Foster Care:	Available Parent(s) Employed:	Disabilities:
Homeless:	Multiple Year Enrollment:	Family Referrals:
Public Assistance:	Over-Income:	Child Referrals:

Current with Immunizations:

Current with Well-Child Exams:

Medical Insurance:

Medical Home:

LOCATIONS:

Home-based (11)

Arizona Desert HS (34)

Union Dos Rios (34)

TOTAL ENROLLMENT 79

Maricopa County Head Start Zero to Five Early Childhood Education Impact 2013

High Quality Early Care and Education with Supports for Children, Families, Community, and Educators

Maricopa County Early Education Division is funded by the Federal Head Start program. Head Start serves families living below the poverty level at no cost to parents.

The program serves children birth to age 5 through home visits or center-based education. Children in center-based program participate in part-day or full-day education, are provided breakfast and lunch and are connected with health care providers. Children in home-based services receive weekly visits with an education that supports parents as their child's primary educator.

Parent and family engagement opportunities are provided, including: assisting parents in learning more about family literacy, family health services, nutrition at home school readiness, family goal setting, and social service referrals

High quality teaching staff, thoughtful curriculum planning, and regular assessment ensures that the development of children is the principle focus of the program. 42% of teachers have bachelors degrees and another 39% have associate degrees. Teaching staff maintain and improve skills through working with teacher mentors and individualized professional development plans.

Combining these child and family services, Maricopa County Head Start Zero to Five program is able to better prepare children for Kindergarten



Children Served

2,827 TOTAL

418 Children 0 to age 2

2,409 Children age 3 to 5



Children with Special Needs

11 % of Children

145 Identified through program screening and assessment



Families Referred to Social Services

511 for Emergency/Crisis Intervention

568 for Adult Education



School Readiness

96% of 4 year old children met school readiness goals at the end of the year



Healthy Children

2,501 Children completed needed physical exams

2,617 Children have all needed Immunizations

Maricopa County Head Start: Supporting Success for Children and Families



All children need and deserve a good start. Attending high quality early childhood programs is an important part of starting early and starting right.

Entering Kindergarten	Children from Lowest SES Families	Children from Highest SES Families
Counts to 20	48%	68%
Writes own Name	54%	76%
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	39%	85%
Identifies initial sounds of words	10%	51%

When children enter kindergarten, there are already significant differences in literacy and math skill between children of low, middle, and high socio-economic status (SES)

S. Neuman, "From rhetoric to reality: The case for high-quality compensatory prekindergarten programs (2003)"

	Children from Lowest SES Families	Children from Highest SES Families
Hours Read to Before Kindergarten	25	1000
	Children from Welfare Families	Children from Professional Families
Words addressed to child by age 4 (cumulative, estimated)	13 Million	45 Million

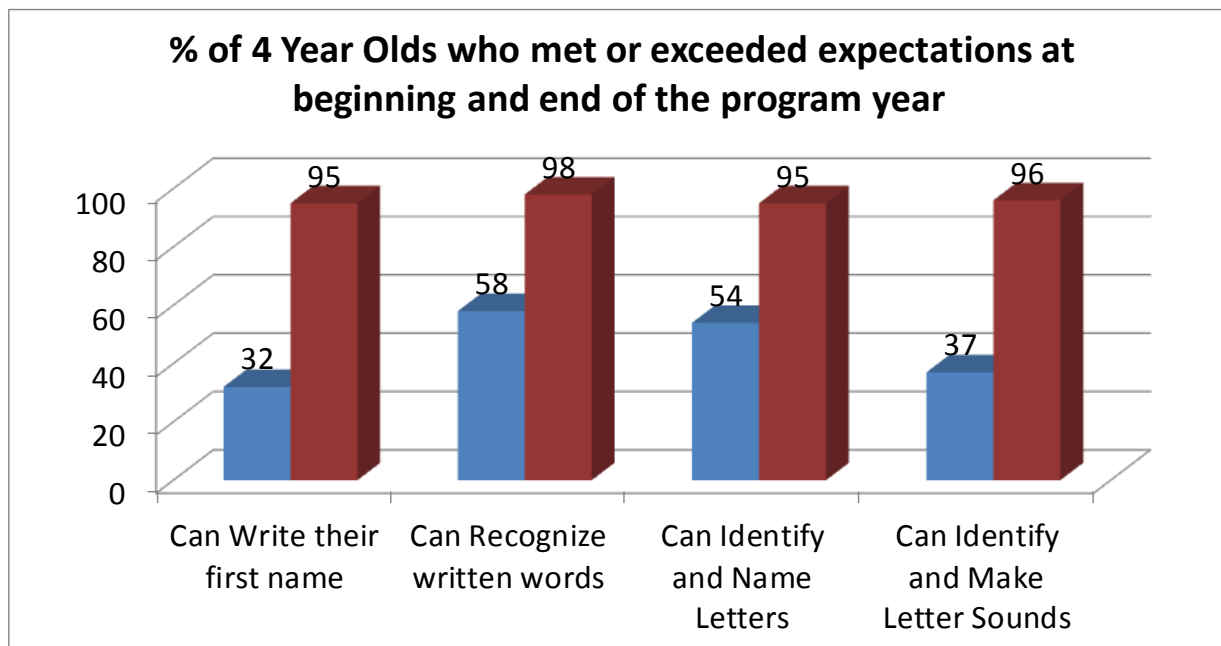
Maricopa County Head Start: Supporting Success for Children and Families



CLOSING THE GAP

Children who have a Head Start preschool experience are better prepared for school and more likely to succeed

Maricopa County Head Start Assessment Data: Teaching Strategies GOLD obj.19,14, 16, 15 (2013)



The long-term impact of early childhood education program (including Head Start) found multiple benefits for low-income children

- ⇒ Children were less likely to be held back in school
- ⇒ Children were less likely to be placed in special education classes
- ⇒ Children were more likely to graduate from high school
- ⇒ Children were more likely to be rated as behaving well in class and being better adjusted in school

RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Creating Awareness and Marketing Programs



About Ryan Narramore

Marketing & Communications Manager,
Southwest Human Development

M.P.S., Strategic Public Relations,
The George Washington University
B.S., Public Relations & Advertising,
Northern Arizona University

9 years of experience in public relations,
marketing and advertising:


- GoDaddy.com
- Phoenix Coyotes (NHL)
- Phoenix Int'l Raceway (NASCAR)
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul
- The White House

Storytelling

- Program success stories are the best way to demonstrate what it is your organization actually does.
- Don't get caught up in using complicated language. Recognize your audience and adapt.
- Share the impact. How did your program change lives?
- Respect ethical obligations while still communicating the results of your efforts.
- Repurpose and use your organization's success stories as a basis for all of your marketing initiatives.

Storytelling

- Client Stories
- Provide Background
- Give Details
- Results
- Compelling Photos

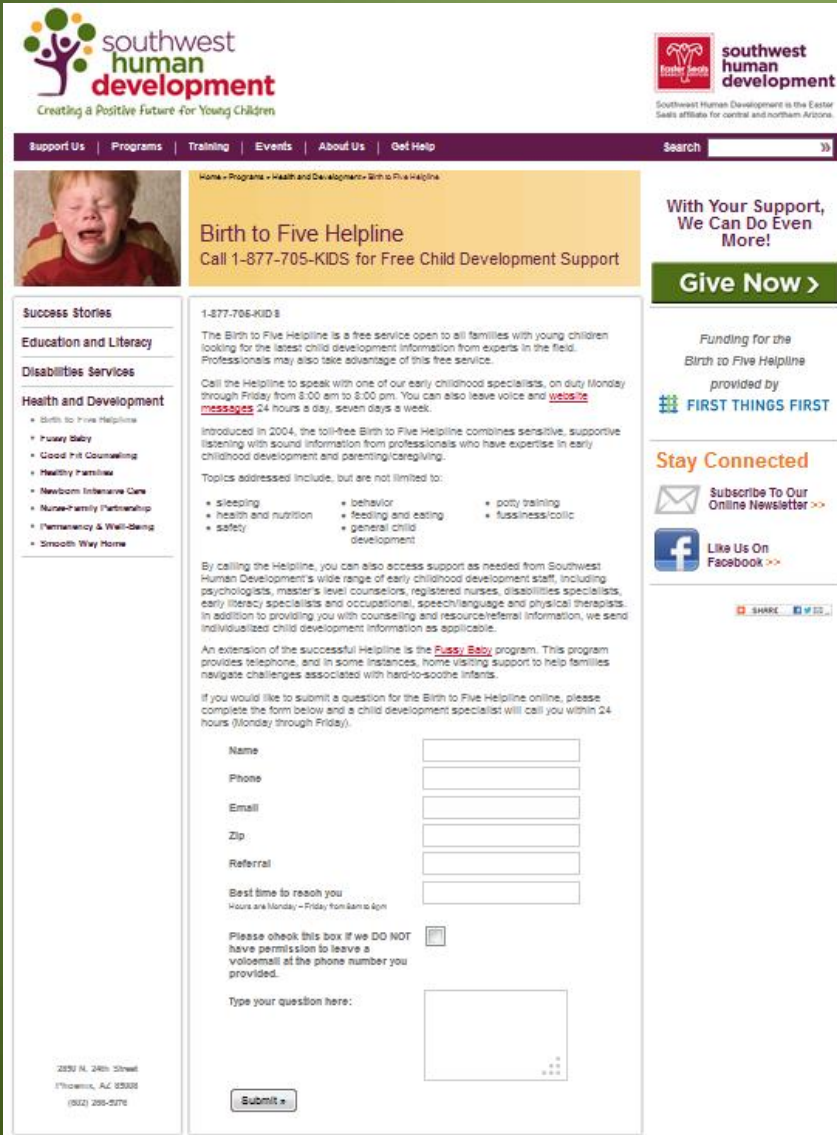


The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with links for Support Us, Programs, Training, Events, About Us, and Get Help. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a large photo of a young girl and a heading for 'Success Stories: Real Lives Touched by Southwest Human Development'. Below this, there are two story snippets. The first story is about a girl named Kitty, who was born prematurely and has developmental delays, but has made remarkable strides with the help of Southwest Human Development's Feeding Program and the Children's Developmental Center. The second story is about twins Aleah and Scarlett, who were enrolled in the Head Start program and graduated to kindergarten. On the right side of the page, there are calls to action: 'With Your Support, We Can Do Even More!' with a 'Give Now >' button, and 'Stay Connected' with links to subscribe to the online newsletter and like the organization on Facebook. A social sharing bar is also visible at the bottom right.

Website

- Typically the first stop for anyone looking to find out information about your organization or program
- Provide up-to-date, detailed information about your programs
- Staff biographies
- Easy navigation and not too many steps needed
- Contact information and ability to get more information
- Consider adding a blog for SEO

Website



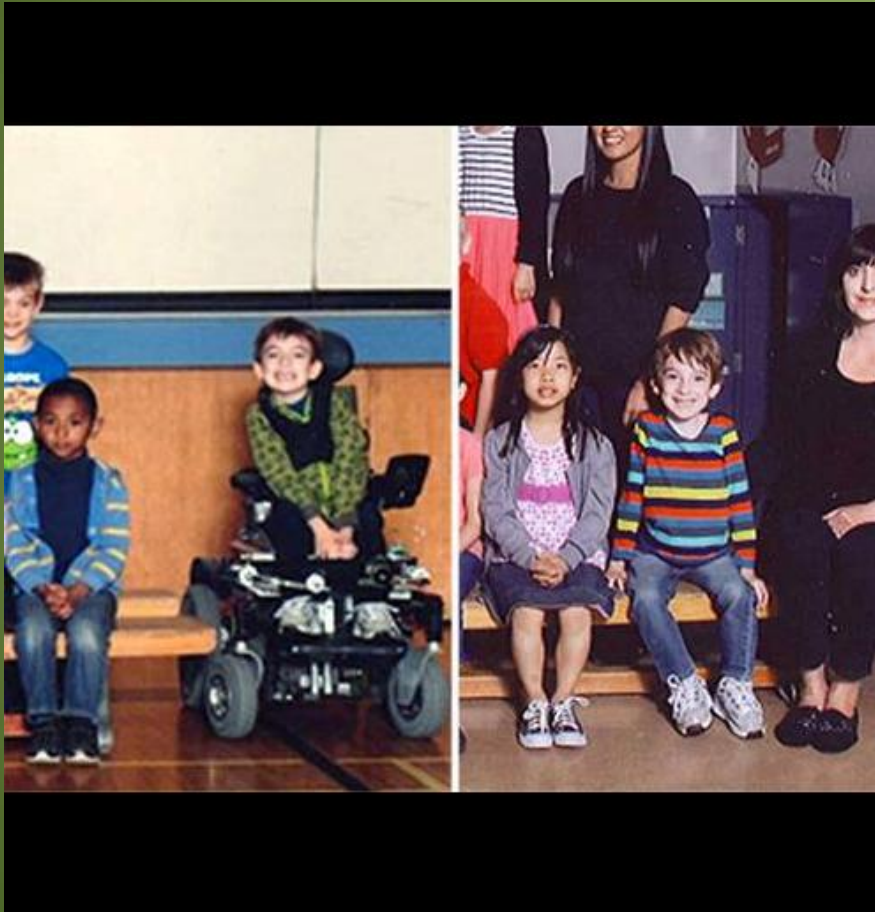
The screenshot shows the website's layout for the Birth to Five Helpline. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Support Us, Programs, Training, Events, About Us, and Get Help, along with a search box. The main content area features a large image of a crying child and a prominent call to action: "Birth to Five Helpline Call 1-877-705-KIDS for Free Child Development Support". Below this, there is a "Give Now" button and a section titled "Funding for the Birth to Five Helpline provided by FIRST THINGS FIRST". A "Stay Connected" section includes links to subscribe to the online newsletter and like the Facebook page. The central text describes the helpline's services, including a toll-free number, operating hours, and a list of topics addressed such as sleeping, behavior, potty training, health and nutrition, feeding and eating, fussiness/colic, and safety. A contact form is provided at the bottom, with fields for Name, Phone, Email, Zip, Referral, and Best time to reach you. A checkbox for voicemail permission and a text area for questions are also present. The footer contains the organization's address: 2337 N. 24th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85016, (602) 295-5176.

- Side Navigation
- Highly Visible Phone Number
- Detailed Program Description
- Contact Form
- Links to Programs

Social Media

- Social media is here to stay!
- Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram and many more
- Provides a way for you to communicate with people on *their* terms
 - In the U.S., people spend over 120 BILLION minutes a month using social media
- Use brief messages with links back to your website
- Always try to post a photo!

Social Media



Southwest Human Development
Liked · June 20

We're proud to see that Miles' class retook their class photo! Inclusion for young children with disabilities is so incredibly important. In the original photo, the 7-year-old and his wheelchair appear singled out, but now, Miles and his ever-so-perfect smile are part of the group. More on this story from the Today Show at <http://on.today.com/10AxmsA> or find out more about Southwest Human Development's inclusion program at www.swhd.org/inclusion.

Tag Photo Add Location Edit

Unlike · Comment · Share · Edit

Southwest Human Development and 171 others like this.

80 shares

Irma Hudson What a dramatic difference, he was straining so hard to be a part of the group, he has always been a part of the group, but now it shows!
Unlike · Reply · 10 · June 21 at 8:11am

Teresa Maldonado I don't see why they couldn't
Write a comment...

15,048 unique impressions!

Media Relations

- Local and national news media is a great way to reach a broad audience
- Target specific publications and research reporters
- Develop key messages and talking points - PRACTICE
- Find newsworthy topics to discuss about your work:
 - Inspiring client stories
 - Recent studies/reports
 - Current events
- Your goal is to be recognized as an expert about a topic so media comes to you

Media Relations

Examples:

- Mindy Zapata spoke with *The Arizona Republic* about Arizona lagging in child welfare, following the release of the annual *Kids Count* survey that ranked Arizona No. 47
- NPR talked with Suzanne Schunk about children who are aging out of Arizona's foster care system.
- Dr. Kessler talked with *The Arizona Republic* about how autism is diagnosed.



Advertising

- Target specific publications that reach your key audience
- A large reach is always good, but not a decision maker
 - You want active, interested audiences
- Frequency is important for recall
- Google AdWords
 - Identify key search terms
 - Set daily budget for auto-bidding on keywords
 - Pay per click – don't pay for impressions
 - Google Grants
- Sponsored content

Advertising

- 6" x 5" ad
- 12 paid, 4 free
- \$1,350 budget

MAY 2013																																			
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KMOG 1420AM																								F	SA	SU	M			TH	F				
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PAYSON ROUND-UP																																					
KMOG 1420AM																																					

A program of Southwest Human Development

Birth to Five HELPLINE



A free service for families and caregivers with questions about early childhood development



1-877-705-KIDS (5437)
www.BirthToFiveHelpline.org

Community Outreach

- Create partnerships with people in the community that have an interest and can help promote your programs
 - Pediatricians
 - Parent groups
 - Other nonprofits/community organizations
- Talk about your programs, give presentations
- Manage your web presence
 - Directory profiles like HealthGrades, WebMD, etc.
 - What do people find when they Google you?
- Printed/electronic newsletters, other mass mailings



southwest
human
development

Creating a Positive Future for Young Children



Where Social Media and PTA Advocacy Collide

Social media is a powerful tool that is changing the way people absorb information, mobilize for advocacy, and raise awareness about issue campaigns. Research shows that more than 90 percent of people trust peer recommendations, but only 33 percent trust messages from brands and organizations. This is the power of social media, where networks are comprised of friends, family, community, and connections, which allows organizations to amplify a singular message and spread it quickly.

The implication for PTAs at all levels is significant. If people talk and share information about PTA and its issue campaigns, their friends on social media are more likely to respond favorably than they would to a message directly from PTA. PTA units at all levels will benefit from how quickly information can be shared and how much of their followers' networks can see their posts and activities

Getting Started

If your PTA is not already on a social media website but wants to be, the first step is simple: sign up! It's free! Make sure that you give plenty of thought to the name of your page or account, because once you open the account, you will not be able to change it without losing your fans or followers. Also make sure that you have a clear process for determining who will be the primary user. Typically, the unit or state president, communications director, or advocacy/legislative director would be a good choice for handling social media accounts, but some units or affiliates may determine that another person is the correct fit. Be sure to keep track of the login information and distribute it to people you trust so that at the end of the term, or when people move on, the information to your social media accounts is not lost.

Once you are on a social media site, do not feel compelled to immediately start posting content. If you are unsure of how things work or what sort of content is appropriate for you to post, take some time to get a feel for how the channel works. Monitor comparable users and pages, and discover what you think works well and what does not. A good way to begin putting content out while learning how to use the system is to simply share or repost what National PTA (and/or your state PTA, if you are working with a local unit) has posted.

Speak to your audience. Learn where they are. Are most of your volunteers active on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or all three? Each platform appeals to a different audience, so take that into consideration when you are venturing out.

To effectively use and leverage social media, think critically about how you can make your content short, compelling and relevant. Experiment with different types of posts, sometimes sharing links to videos or blogs and using images and video to get a better idea of what resonates with your audience. It's all about creating engagement and conversation. You want to get people's attention around a certain issue. Make sure your message is clear when they tune in.

Building PTA Awareness

The social media platforms Facebook and Twitter can serve as "conversation catalysts" for education reform and child advocacy. Simply bringing awareness to PTA efforts is very effective for membership growth, member participation, volunteer development and most importantly, strategically advancing your issue campaign. Experiment with education quotes, education news stories, simple status updates about new initiatives you are working on and sharing/cross-promoting with partners to see what works best for your audience. Don't be afraid to ask your partners and members to repost or share some of your most successful posts.

Facebook

Organizations use "pages" on Facebook rather than personal profiles. You can create a page from your personal Facebook account, grant other PTA leaders editorial access to the page and post on behalf of your PTA. On a page, you can post content on a central wall, including photos, questions and surveys, news bulletins, tips and videos, all while interacting directly with commenters. Facebook users have the option to "like" your page, which means that the content you post on your page wall can show up in their news feeds.

Keep these Facebook best practices in mind as you move forward with your advocacy efforts:

- **Consider your post frequency.** This is a delicate balancing act. Post too little and your posts are unlikely to end up in your fans' news feeds, but post too much and your fans are likely to "unlike" you. Once your page is up, try to post once or twice a day if possible.
- **Develop relationships.** Get to know the people who are frequently commenting on the page. Engage in conversation with them by asking questions and responding to posts.
- **Find a voice that works for your PTA and use it.** You should adopt a voice for your association that allows multiple people to actively respond to comments and concerns in a positive, knowledgeable way while also being consistent in tone.
- **Make your page "sticky."** Maximize user experience by making your content more engaging. You want them to stay there as long as they can and enjoy their time on the page. Try to have links back to your website.

National PTA on Facebook: Check out and "Like" National PTA's Facebook Page - [Facebook.com/ParentTeacherAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/ParentTeacherAssociation)

Twitter

Twitter allows users to share short messages up to 140-characters in length. Due to the brevity of its messages, Twitter is an ideal channel to share straightforward information including your advocacy efforts, statistics, event promotion and member recognition. Users can post video footage, images and links to refer Twitter followers to external sites. Twitter is also the preferred channel for sharing live information. For example, participants can tweet throughout a PTA function to give followers updates and quick tidbits of information about the event.

Keep these Twitter best practices in mind as you move forward with your advocacy efforts:

- **Respond quickly.** Stay current with Twitter mentions and respond to any questions or concerns within two hours.
- **Choose who you follow.** Follow people who are interested in the same issues as you. You should also follow individuals who actively engage with you, either by retweeting your posts or tweeting at you.

- **Build a relationship with users.** Be sure to thank people for mentioning you, following you or just comment on some thing they said that was interesting. If they post interesting content, feel free to retweet it. Generally, people will follow you if you genuinely reach out to them.
- **Join the conversation.** If people are talking about things that matter to you, feel free to join the conversation!

National PTA on Twitter - [Twitter.com/NationalPTA](https://twitter.com/NationalPTA)

Dealing with Negative Comments

Negative comments are an inevitable part of social media, especially around issues that people feel passionately about. To be successful on social media, you have to be willing to take the good with the bad and recognize that you cannot control what other users say—you can only control how you react. Engagement is a sign that your campaign is attracting attention and that people are interested in sharing their opinions, both positive and constructive. In many cases, a post that you find disagreeable or contrary to your own opinion may not provide grounds for deletion. If you delete every post that you find objectionable, you may escalate the problem or alienate users on your page. Grounds for deleting a post include: use of profanity or derogatory language, personal insults or disrespectful language against another user or spam or overly solicitous content.

For most comments, it is best to respond in a respectful way and provide accurate information to support your position. Remain calm, judicious and refrain from sharp, heated posts.

Interactions with Elected Officials or Members of the Administration

It is ok to interact with elected officials or members of an executive administration (whether this be at the federal or state level) with regards to legislation. In fact, using your unit or state affiliate's Facebook and Twitter accounts to reach out to your elected officials to support or oppose legislation is an excellent way to make your voice heard for every child. However, because PTA is a nonprofit organization, you must refrain from interacting with the campaigns of elected officials or posting/reposting a message from anyone that has a campaign message for any candidate.

SAMPLE LETTERS AND EMAILS

General Invitation Letter to Visit Program:

VIA EMAIL TO SCHEDULER/SCHEDULING EMAIL ADDRESS

DATE

The Honorable [NAME]

United States Senator/US Representative

DC OFFICE ADDRESS

ATTN: Scheduler

Dear Senator/Representative [LAST NAME]:

On behalf of all of us at the [YOUR CENTER] Head Start Center, I write to you today to thank you for arriving at a budget agreement to restore the sequester funds to Head Start programs. Additionally, we would like to invite you to visit our program when you are back in the area for spring recess – our students are excited to show you what they have been learning!

As you may already know, we serve XX children and families in STATE/CITY, and have been working for over XX years to provide a quality early learning experience for those at risk. (INSERT MORE FACTS ABOUT LOCAL PROGRAM)

Head Start ensures success by becoming a compassionate partner with parents on behalf of their children. Recognizing that parents are their child's first and most influential teachers, we work with families to remove barriers to their success and to deepen their ability to support their children. Children who go through Head Start are less likely to need special education classes or repeat grades when they're older, and are far more likely to graduate high school and help their families escape a cycle of poverty.

We thank you for your consideration of our invitation, and hope you can join us in April.

Best,

NAME

CENTER

PHONE NUMBER

October 16, 2014

The Honorable US Representative Sinema
1237 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sinema:

On behalf the Maricopa County Head Start Program, I thank you for arriving at a budget agreement to restore the sequester funds to Head Start programs and for your support in reauthorizing the Child Care and Development Block Grant program. I would like to invite you to visit our program to help us celebrate 50 years of Head Start opportunities in Arizona— our children and families are excited to show you what they have been learning!

As you may already know the Maricopa County Human Services Department serves over 2,500 children and families in Maricopa County (excluding the City of Phoenix), and have been working for over 49 years to provide a quality early learning experience for income eligible children in your District. We have unique partnerships with programs serving homeless families, families in refugee communities, children with disabilities, and with incarcerated pregnant and parenting teens. We also work closely with our school districts to ensure successful transitions of Head Start children into Kindergarten.

Head Start ensures success by becoming a compassionate educational partner with parents on behalf of their children. Recognizing that parents are their child's first and most influential teachers, we work with families to remove barriers to their success and to deepen their ability to support their children. Children who go through our Head Start program arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and are less likely to need special education classes or repeat grades when they're older, and are far more likely to graduate high school and help their families escape a cycle of poverty.

We thank you for your consideration of our invitation, and hope you can join us in to honor Head Start's long tradition as the premier model for providing the whole child an opportunity for success in school and in life. We hope to have the opportunity to make you proud of our efforts to serve the vulnerable youngest children of your district. Please contact me to arrange a visit when you are in town. I can be reached at (480) 464-9669 ext. 201

Best Wishes,

Alecia Jackson, M.Ed.
Assistant Director
Maricopa County Human Services Department



Invitation Letter to an Event:

SUBJECT: INVITATION TO JOIN A HEAD START MEDIA EVENT @ (AREA) HEAD START PROGRAM

VIA EMAIL TO SCHEDULER/EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

CC: Local district/state staff or DC office staff you have worked with previously

The Honorable (First and Last Name of Representative or Senator)

(United States House of Representatives or United States Senate)

Washington, DC

Dear Senator/Representative (Last Name of Legislator):

(Insert name of child care or Head Start program), located in (insert name of town, name of state), provides comprehensive, high quality early education to (XX) children each week—though sequestration has taken a toll on us, we are committed to continuing to operate the best possible program for our area’s at-risk children and families. As you make plans to visit your constituents over the August District Work period, we hope you join us for a special event on (day/during the week of) to call attention to the children and families we have had to cut from our Head Start and Early Head Start program.

This month, we will be displaying XX empty seats outside of our facility to mark the (XX) lost opportunities due to sequestration. During the week of August 19th, we are planning a public event at our facility to raise awareness for these lost opportunities. We feel that it is important that people understand that at Head Start, there isn’t much fat to trim-- Even with the local flexibility we are afforded to implement the cuts, since our operating costs for energy, transportation, and health insurance have continued to rise over the last few years, we have had to make the devastating choice to close centers/cut children/lay off staff.

And as you know, these cuts matter more than others. For every \$1 invested in a Head Start child, society gains \$7 in return through increased earnings, employment, and family stability; and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education.

We know you agree that sequestration is a poor way to cut government costs, and hope you will join us to talk about the local impacts of this policy. We plan to invite local media, and have photographs taken of the chairs and our guests to be posted on social media. We will also be following up with media after the event to share our photographs and remarks made.

We look forward to the opportunity of hosting you at our program for this event. I will follow up with your staff soon to work out the details.

Sincerely,

(Center director’s name)

Sample follow-up email to scheduler after a phone conversation:

Dear (Name):

It was a pleasure to speak with you today. For your reference, below is the invitation we sent to the Congressman. I'm happy to answer any additional questions you or the Representative may have.

(Include other follow-up points from your conversation)

We do hope that we can arrange a visit for the upcoming recess. Our children will be well-served meeting with a prominent elected official—a community celebrity reading with them is always exciting—and their parents and our staff will be so delighted for his/her engagement and attention to their work.

Please let me know if there is a date that will work; we understand that he/she has many demands!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

(paste original invitation below or forward original email)

Sample follow-up email to scheduler after leaving a voice message:

Dear (Name):

Per my voice message, I wanted to follow up today regarding the (NAME OF PROGRAM)'s request for Congressman (NAME) to visit our program during the upcoming District Work Period. I have included a copy of that request below.

We do hope that we can arrange a visit for the upcoming recess. Our children will be well-served meeting a prominent elected official—a community celebrity reading with them (or other activity) is always exciting—and their parents and our staff will be so delighted for his/her engagement and attention to their work.

Please let me know if there is a date that will work; we are happy to be flexible and understand that he/she has many demands!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

(paste original invitation below or forward original email)

Sample Thank You Letter to Member of Congress:

Format this letter on your program's letterhead. Then scan and email the pdf to the scheduler and/or staff.

(Date)

The Honorable (First and Last Name of Representative or Senator)
(United States House of Representatives or United States Senate)
Address

Dear Senator or Representative (Last Name):

Thank you for taking the time to visit with the parents and staff from the (NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM) during your recess last week. We hope that our visit helped to make clear how Head Start and Early Head Start centers in our community provide high quality early learning experiences for at-risk children and families. We also hope you enjoy your hand-decorated jar of jelly beans—a reminder of the Head Start students' excitement that can continue to hold treats for visiting constituents!

[MORE DETAILS ON VISIT, OR MORE DETAILS THAT YOU PROMISED]

As we discussed, we are thrilled that the FY14 Omnibus Appropriations legislation passed, and funds are beginning to be restored to Head Start and Early Head Start programs. We appreciate your willingness to discuss the impacts of sequestration in our community and the challenges ahead; please know how excited we are to be on the road back to restoring services to children and families in our community.

Over the next few months as the 2015 budget process continues, we sincerely hope that we can be a resource to you. Please let us know if you have any questions, and thank you again for visiting our program.

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME

Sample Thank You Email to Staff

Dear (NAME):

Thank you for taking the time to (join Congressman Doe during his) visit with the parents and staff from the (NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM) during recess last week. We hope that our visit helped to make clear how Head Start and Early Head Start centers in our community provide high quality early learning experiences for at-risk children and families. We also hope you and Congressman/Senator (NAME) enjoy your hand-decorated jar of jelly beans—a reminder of the Head Start students' excitement that can continue to hold treats for visiting constituents!

[MORE DETAILS ON VISIT, OR MORE DETAILS THAT YOU PROMISED]

As we discussed, we are thrilled that the FY14 Omnibus Appropriations legislation passed, and funds are beginning to be restored to Head Start and Early Head Start programs. We appreciate your understanding of the impacts of sequestration in our community and the challenges ahead; please know how excited we are to be on the road back to restoring services to children and families in our community.

Over the next few months as the 2015 budget process continues, we sincerely hope that we can be a resource to you and (Representative/Senator NAME). Please let us know if you have any questions, and thank you again for visiting our program.

Best,
YOUR NAME

Sample Thank-You Email to Scheduler:

Dear (NAME):

I wanted to send you a note to express my sincere thanks for your assistance in arranging for Congressman/Senator (NAME) to visit our program today. Our children, parents, staff, and volunteers were so thrilled to have had his ear and honored by his attention to our program—and it would not have happened without your help!

We will deliver a framed photo of his time reading with the children next week; we hope it is a suitable memento of his time with us today and a reminder that he is always welcome!

Many thanks,
YOUR NAME

Sample Thank-You Email to Press Secretary:

Dear (NAME):

Thank you so much for your assistance in arranging to connect the photos and quotes from the Congressman's visit to our press release and social media feeds today! Our entire family of children, parents, staff, and volunteers were so happy to have the Congressman present and we hope our extra push to let the community know about his visit was helpful.

As you requested, I'm attaching a few more photos for your use. Our favorite is the one with him reading to the children. We're glad to keep the conversation going over social media as well!

Thank you again,
YOUR NAME

SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASES

Alecia Jackson - HSDX

From: Richard De Uriarte - PIOX
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Alecia Jackson - HSDX; Dolores Retana - HSDX; Cari Gerchick - CAOX; 'Daedalus, Tristan'
Cc: Richard De Uriarte - PIOX; Terri Mulholland - CAOX
Subject: U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon to visit Head Start program in Gilbert Tuesday



Maricopa County Board of Supervisors

Cari Gerchick 602-790-8621

Richard de Uriarte 602-506-7232

October 20, 2014

U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon to visit Head Start program in Gilbert Tuesday

Head Start celebrates its 50th year

U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, R-AZ, will visit the Gilbert Boys & Girls Club Tuesday morning to tour the Head Start classroom there and talk with the students, staff and parents.

The visit is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, at the Gilbert Boys & Girls Club, 44 N. Oak Street in Gilbert.

The local program has emphasized STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities which the pre-school students will demonstrate for Rep. Salmon, who represents Arizona's 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Salmon serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. He served three terms in the U.S. House in the 1990s, then retired his seat to abide by a self-imposed three term limit. He was elected to Congress again in 2012.

"With the necessity of a strong STEM education in today's increasingly technical world, I am proud to see the Gilbert Boys and Girls Club taking an active role in building that education and those skills from an early age," Salmon said. "I look forward to touring the facility tomorrow morning."

Head Start is a federally-funded, locally-administered program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parental-involvement services to low-income children and their families. It was initiated in 1965 and is celebrating its 50th year in service.

Please visit www.maricopa.gov/bos for information about each member of the Board of Supervisors.

Sample Media Advisory for an Event:

DRAFT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE

Media Contact:

MEDIA ADVISORY

Head Start to Host Healthy Homes Open House

Featuring local health service providers; Congressman John Doe to make remarks

The (NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM) plans to host the Healthy Homes Open House event on (DATE), a community wellness forum featuring local representatives from our county and city health system. Congressman John Doe (IN-3) will join to express support for the event.

The event, sponsored/supported by the Main Street Hospital, welcomes local health service providers who have generously offered to host information booths at the center, where they and their volunteers will help families obtain free basic eye and hearing exams, nutrition information, and immunizations. Congressman Doe, a retired physician, will attend to meet the providers and families, and make brief remarks about the importance of public health programs.

These services are part of the core mission of the Head Start program, which ensures a comprehensive intervention, including health and wellness services, for our community's at-risk families.

WHAT: Healthy Homes Open House

WHEN: DATE

TIME (9AM- 3PM)

WHERE: Address

WHO: List all guests

CONTACT: Name
(111) 222-3333

Additional information about us can be found at (website)

Additional information about (your partner) can be found at (website)

###

Sample Press Release:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE

Media contact: [Insert Name]
[Insert Phone]
[Insert Email]

Congressman John Doe Visits Head Start

Congressman meets local volunteers and families, reads and paints with the class and expresses his support.

CITY, ST – (NAME) Head Start program today welcomed Congressman John Doe for a visit and tour of the facility.

While the students began their day (learning, reading, playing, etc), the Congressman took a tour of the facility and learned first hand what Head Start does to serve the at-risk children in (CITY). Volunteers, parents, staff, and community partners were on hand to answer questions and explain how much Head Start has impacted their lives.

“Head Start has absolutely saved my family,” said Jane Jones, a Head Start parent from CITY. “I was an inexperienced mother and had no support, Head Start gave us the tools to succeed. I’m proud to say my two daughters are now on the honor roll in 3rd grade, I’ve got a good job, and now we give back to Head Start every chance we get.”

Congressman Doe’s tour ended with a fun painting project with the children, who took their celebrity guest in stride.

“I’m so impressed by the work that (NAME) Head Start does to serve our community’s children and families. It’s clear that without these services, many of our at-risk citizens would have nowhere to turn. I will certainly continue championing the Head Start program when I am back in Washington.”

###

Sample Social Media:

TWITTER:

“Excited to welcome @repjohndoe at @yourheadstart to talk about what he’s doing to continue his commitment to early childhood education”

“Great to have @repjohndoe at our program today! Glad to hear his enthusiasm for early childhood programs—hope he helps keep us strong.” (INSERT PIC W/ REP)

“Thanks to @repjohndoe for promising to work on expanding Head Start after visiting us today!” (INSERT PIC)

FACEBOOK:

“THANK YOU to Representative John Doe for visiting the NAME Head Start program today! With the school year about to begin we are glad to hear that Representative John Doe to do everything in his power to ensure Head Start programs are funded- providing early childhood education to hundreds of thousands of children in low income families.”

“We’re looking forward to our visit with Representative John Doe (TAG HIS OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE) next week. We at (NAME OF HEAD START ORGANIZATION) appreciate the opportunity to talk about Congress’ commitment to Head Start programs and the children that depend on them.”

“We had the chance yesterday to visit with Representative John Doe (TAG HIS OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE) in our (CITY) Head Start Center. We had a great discussion with him about continuing to invest in our next generation! (INSERT PIC W/ REP)”

Working with the Media

Media play a huge role in our society by helping shape public opinion. Getting media coverage can be a huge asset to educating members of the community, raising awareness, and garnering support for programs or initiatives you are working on. A few things you will want to keep in mind when working with members of the media:

- Always read or watch their coverage before reaching out to them. It is important to know what type of stories they tend to cover and it will help you to get a sense of their reporting style.
- Reporters are busy and media resources are dwindling these days. Reporters rely more and more on public relations professionals to give them a complete story with up-to-date facts and statistics that they will not need to double-check.
- Email is your best first approach unless you have a great working relationship with a particular reporter and feel comfortable picking up the phone to call directly.

What Are Media Relations?

Media relations are more than getting an interview or story in your local newspaper or on your TV, radio, or cable station. Media relations are about external communication to the masses to increase awareness of PTA or PTA's activities. There are two main aspects to media relations: knowing what is news worthy about what you're doing and building and leveraging the relationships within media.

Identifying Newsworthy Items among Your Activities

Consider asking yourself these questions to identify whether your activities are news worthy:

1. Is there timeliness to what you're doing?
2. Is there something prominent in your activity or event?
3. Are you making a statement on a current hot issue or topic?
4. Are you calling for action on a local issue?
5. Is there a significant human element to your cause?

If you answered yes to at least three of these questions, you may have a story that is news worthy. For example, a general meeting may be listed in the community calendar section or on a community bulletin board, but it will not be considered news.

However, if your PTA is addressing an issue of vital interest to the community, such as education funding or curriculum changes, a media outlet may send a reporter or ask for an interview.

Look for Photo Opportunities

If you are hosting an event, ask your local newspaper to send a photographer or send photographs to your local paper immediately after the event. Include captions that describe what is happening in the photo and identify participants. Be sure your photos show action and activity instead of people simply smiling and shaking hands. Always remember to obtain a photo release form for any pictures you plan to share with the media. You can find one on the PTA's website, at <http://www.ptakit.org/Communications/Photography-and-Videography/Release-Forms.aspx>.

Building and Leveraging Media Relationships

Finding the right reporters is critical to getting started with building a contact list. The best way to build a list of local reporters is to first read and watch the news outlets in your market. This will help you identify which reporters are covering specific topics. For example, is there a local news reporter that you have seen cover news of school or education programs? Note his/her name and do a quick scan of the outlet's website for a phone number or email. This might take a bit of digging and time in the beginning, but you will find that building a targeted media list will be well worth the investment. When you do reach out to a reporter, offer yourself as a contact on education and family articles, and find out if it's ok for you to send them information on what you're doing as a PTA leader.

Maintaining good relationships with these reporters will be what helps you place your story. Try to be selective about what you are taking to each reporter. Make sure you are being strategic – there is a fine line between staying on the radar and bombarding contacts with too many non-newsy updates. Reporters appreciate resources – and that means you!

Only pitch stories to them that you know they would have interest in covering. And if they do not cover your story, thank them anyway. Or perhaps point them to another resource where they can get the information they are looking for. They will remember that you helped them and that will make the difference for next time. Similar to building relationships with members of Congress, you need to continue to nourish the relationship even when there isn't news to share.

To Cultivate Relationships with Members of the Media:

- Invite reporters to coffee or lunch for a background briefing on important PTA issues.
- Welcome reporters to PTA meetings or programs.
- Create an e-mail list of reporters and send monthly or bimonthly items of note.

In the end, they are looking for a resource; someone they can count on, who is reliable, credible, can respond quickly and is trust worthy. Once you have exhibited these traits, the media will trust you and take the news you provide them about your PTA seriously.

Pitches and Press Releases

Two fundamental tools you will use to conduct media outreach with are a pitch and a press release. Both are designed to communicate your message to reporters. What is the difference and when do you use one versus the other?

A pitch is a great tool to convince a journalist your story is news-worthy and relevant to his or her audience. It can either supplement a press release or serve as a stand-alone tool. A pitch is less formal and more targeted to a specific reporter than a standard press release. Think of it as a short e-mail to a reporter outlining why your story is of interest to his/her particular beat and audience. Perhaps he/she has covered this issue in the past or could benefit from connecting with you (or another spokesperson) to gain insight, information or news? A pitch is your chance to present yourself as a valuable resource. It should provide a reporter reading it with a quick snapshot of who you are, what your news is and why it is relevant.

A press release is a written, formal statement to the media on behalf of an organization. It typically announces a range of news items, including events, awards, new products, or programs. A press release is useful when there is a milestone event, program launch or other “big” news coming from your PTA that is intended for a broad media audience. It follows a standard format, contains the appropriate contact information and allows a reporter the chance to follow up with you, should he/she be interested in pursuing a story.

All PTAs should send out press releases. How well a press release is written is almost as important as the information it contains. In general, the most important information comes first, with less important details in later paragraphs.

Components of an Effective Press Release

- Deliver key information quickly: who, what, where, when, why and how should be found near the top of the release.
- Keep it short. Use action words and simple sentences with common language.
- Report the facts, not opinions. Avoid editorializing and using adjectives such as “outstanding” or “interesting” when describing programs, events, etc.
- Don’t use titles like Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss. Refer to people by their full name on first reference.
- On second mention, refer to people by their last names only.
- Verify your facts. Your credibility depends on the accuracy of the information.
- Check —and then double check—spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

After sending a pitch or a press release, be sure to follow up with the appropriate reporter to ensure they received it and answer any questions they may have.

Some sample press releases are included below. You may visit the Press Center at [PTA.org/About](https://www.pta.org/About) for more.

Tip:

If you bombard the media with letters and press releases about stories that aren’t news, editors may begin to ignore all communications from your PTA.

Your Toolbox

Take the time to develop a file of resources. This will help organize the many activities you will undertake. Here are some ideas for how to build this toolbox:

Get to Know PTA

Know PTA’s goals, programs, public policies, and activities on the local, state, and national levels. Familiarize yourself with National PTA resources, such as Our Children Magazine, PTA Takes Action Updates, the Public Policy Agenda, PTA Parent, and [PTA.org](https://www.pta.org).

Determine Who Your Spokesperson Is

Create a list of PTA leaders who can speak for the organization. Make sure that you have the names and telephone numbers of PTA officers. Keep information on your PTA and its activities close at hand.

Develop a Media List

Include reporters' and editors' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. This information can be obtained from the outlet's website or by calling them to find out the appropriate staff member to receive PTA information. Know media deadlines and the reporters who are interested in family involvement and education news. This is where your carefully crafted media list comes into play.

Communicate with PTA PR Contacts

Work closely with your state and council PR chairs. Contact them to find out how they can help you, and get on their mailing lists for PR materials, press releases, and other information.

State PR Chair

He or she can provide valuable insights on handling issues specific to your area or state. Ask about media training opportunities to be held at the state PTA convention or other state resources.

National PTA Headquarters

Contact the Communications department for help in the planning process: (800) 307-4PTA (4782).

National PTA Website

You'll find press releases, articles, information, and news on parenting, education, health, and safety issues at **PTA.org**.

Additional Media Relations Tools

In addition to a pitch and press release, there are a variety of other communication tools that can be used to bring attention to your PTA and to garner support for your programs and activities.

Op-Eds/Letters to the Editor

Op-ed pieces are written to grab the attention of various groups, including elected officials, business and community leaders and the general public. Write about your PTA's public policy positions, and submit it as a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, inviting readers to join PTA. Newspaper editors select pieces for publication based on interest to readers, originality of thought, timeliness, freshness of viewpoint, strength of the argument and the writer's expertise on the issue.

Tips for Writing a Strong Op-Ed:

- Pieces should be about 600-900 words.
- The subject of the piece should be timely and newsworthy.
- Pieces should express a single, clear point of view and be supported by facts and statistics.
- Writing should be powerful and appeal to a general audience.
- Pieces should end leaving a lasting impression and with a clear call to action.

Letters to the editor are another way to reach a large audience. Letters can take a position for or against an issue, simply inform or both. To capture readers' interest, they can include emotions and/or facts.

Tips for Writing a Strong Letter to the Editor:

- Letters should be short and concise, under 300 words in length.
- Your most important points should be stated in the first paragraph.
- Letters should be relevant and refer to a hot topic, recent event in your community or to a recent article.
- Letters should begin with "To the Editor" and should include your name, title and contact information.

Visit the website for your local newspaper for additional guidelines for writing op-ed pieces and letters to the editor as well as submission information.

Broadcast Media

- Prepare your own TV and radio spots about your PTA, if feasible. Many local high schools and colleges can help you with production.
- Ask TV and radio station program directors to identify any upcoming interviews or "talk show" themes where PTA input or participation would be appropriate.
- Submit announcements about upcoming PTA events and meetings to community bulletin boards found on local TV and radio stations, to internet bulletins, and to community websites.
- Cable TV offers opportunities for promoting local groups, programs, and services. Call your local cable company for more information on public access programming and how you can use it for your PTA. Many stations will give up to 30 minutes each month to community service groups.

Sample Press Releases from National PTA's media archive (more can be found in the Press Center at PTA.org/About):

Public Policy Sample:

National PTA Commends Bi-Partisan Family Engagement Legislation

Media Contact:

Jane Doe

Director of Strategic Communications

(555) 555-1234

sample@pta.org

ALEXANDRIA, VA (July 11, 2013)—Today, the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2013 was introduced in the House and the Senate as a means to empower parents, improve capacity for states, and provide much-needed resources for schools to improve family engagement.

Representatives Glenn Thompson (R-PA/5) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY/5), and Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Chris Coons (D-DE) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) will introduce the much-anticipated legislation. Intended to inform comprehensive reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind, the Family Engagement in Education Act would engage all parties with a stake in improving student achievement and school performance.

“National PTA firmly believes that family engagement is at the core of children’s success,” National PTA President Otha Thornton said. “We commend these legislators for advocating on behalf of American families and their children. This bipartisan legislation is crucial in maintaining partnerships between families, schools and the community that ensure student success.”

The Family Engagement in Education Act prioritizes family engagement by targeting federal resources—a small portion (.3 percent) of Title I administrative funds— for state capacity building and the establishment of at least one Local Family Engagement Center to serve the highest-need areas. The legislation would also increase the investment in family engagement locally for qualifying local agencies. With the proper funding and tools, those closest to America’s schools would have the decision-making ability to systemically embed a lasting family engagement infrastructure that is research based and results driven, but flexible in its application.

“Schooling doesn’t begin and end in the classroom. Parents and other family members play a critical role in a child’s education, too,” Rep. McCarthy said. “This bill recognizes that students do better when their families are engaged in their academics and would help ensure that this important relationship is a part of public education in America.”

Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child’s education improves attendance and grades, and reduces dropout rates. In fact, for every parent or family member that moves from “no involvement” to “slightly engaged” in a school, the rise in the level of achievement is equivalent to a \$1000 increase in per-pupil spending. The value of a “highly engaged” parent to a school is even more.

“Too often parental engagement tapers off after elementary school,” Rep. Thompson said. “The Family Engagement in Education Act will provide a frame work that will encourage parents to get out of the bleachers and back into the classroom. The competitiveness of the next generation depends upon it.”

Recent surveys of teachers show that family engagement was identified as a top priority, yet also the area in which teachers feel the least supported. In addition, Title I Administrators repeatedly cite family engagement as a top barrier to effective implementation of federal funds.

“When parents are involved with their children’s education it not only improves schools but also strengthens communities. The Family Engagement in Education Act is a smart investment that will increase resources to strengthen parental involvement and ultimately improve the school community, help educate our future workforce, and strengthen our economy,” said U.S. Senator Jack Reed.

“It’s no secret that students strive harder and perform better when families are actively engaged in their education,” Sen. Coons said. “We can create a brighter future for our country’s youth by ensuring that educators, community organizations, and family members have the resources they need to work together effectively. This legislation will help more families become and remain a driving force in their children’s academic success.”

About National PTA

National PTA® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth. Learn more at PTA.org.

Promotional Event Sample:

National PTA President to be Featured on NBC Nightly News

Media Contact:

John Doe

Media Relations Manager

(555) 555-1235

sample2@pta.org

ALEXANDRIA, VA (Oct. 8, 2013)—National PTA is proud to announce that President Otha Thornton will be featured on NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams on Tuesday, Oct. 8. NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams reaches more than seven million viewers across the country each week, providing reports and analysis of the day’s most newsworthy national and international events.

“We are thrilled that such a prestigious news organization as NBC Nightly News has chosen to highlight our president and the important work of National PTA,” said Eric Hargis, executive director of National PTA. “His extensive leadership experience in various PTA roles across the country and globe has brought energy to our mission of promoting children’s educational success, health and well-being through strong family and community involvement.”

Otha Thornton was installed as president of National PTA in June 2013, making history as the first African-American male chosen to head the association. Under his leadership, National PTA has established partnerships with prestigious organizations including the NFL and AARP. Since taking the helm, Thornton also has launched an awareness campaign to celebrate the achievements of diverse student populations and share resources and advocacy tools to help school communities address the unique needs of every child.

Watch the segment featuring President Thornton on NBC stations. Check local listings for the time of the broadcast. A clip of the segment also will be available at nbcnews.com.

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Work with the Media

The press is a very powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Newspapers, radio shows, and television news programs are looking for stories on relevant topics that have broad public appeal. Citizens can write letters to the editor, call talk shows, and suggest topics to reporters to stimulate interest in early childhood issues.

Write Letters to the Editor

- Letters are most effective when they are in response to a published article. Include the article name and publication date in your letter. Send your letter within 24 hours of the publication date to have a better chance of getting it published.
- Be concise. Shorter letters, generally around 200 words, are more likely to be printed.
- Use clear language that will resonate with the average person.
- The first line of the letter should be a strong statement to draw the reader in.
- Keep it relevant and time-based by mentioning what issues are currently in the news.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms associated specifically with your program.
- Be accurate and avoid personal attacks.
- Close your letter with the thought you want readers to remember.
- Find the letter-writing guidelines of your local newspaper (generally on the editorial page or on the Web site). Make sure you adhere to the word limit and include your name, address, and phone number.

Tips for Early Childhood Programs

General Tips

- Get your stories ready. Use real-life testimonials to demonstrate why your program is important and how it affects children and families.
- Build media relationships. Get to know reporters and local radio-show hosts to build interest in early childhood issues.
- Invite reporters to visit your organization to see first-hand the positive impact your program has on young children.
- Identify spokespersons. One or two staff or board members should be able to represent your organization and your messages. You may want to identify a few families who illustrate success stories and are comfortable talking to the media.

Contact the Media

- If you have news to share, write a press release that incorporates your key messages.
- Do your homework. Read your local newspapers, watch local TV news programs, and listen to local radio news shows. Make a list of the names of reporters who cover education and state government, and get their contact information.
- Do you have existing relationships with reporters? Contact them first to see if they are interested in your story.
- When you call or e-mail a reporter, keep your pitch short and to the point.

Media Interviews

- Make sure your spokespersons are prepared with unified key message points.
- Arrange to have photo opportunities that show the positive aspects of your program.
- Know your stats. Well-used, easy-to-understand numbers can make a strong case for early childhood programs and spending to support those programs.
- Be understandable. Avoid jargon that is specific to your program. Speak in terms that the general public will understand.
- Keep to the facts. NEVER make up or exaggerate data or stories.
- Be confident during the interview. You are the expert on your program and the benefits of early childhood services in your community.

For more media-relations tips, consult the Community Media Workshop (www.newstips.org).

RESOURCES FOR PARENT AND STAFF ADVOCACY

7. Families as Advocates and Leaders

Families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or community and state organizing activities to improve children’s development and learning experiences.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM PROGRESS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that parents’ opinions are heard and included in the program planning processes (e.g., policy council and parent committees, etc.). ■ Ensure that systems and supports are in place to address professional development, continuous improvement, program environment and partnerships related to engaging families as advocates and leaders. ■ Incorporate goals related to family advocacy and leadership into agency work plans and strategic planning.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct regular assessments on parent leadership and advocacy experiences to understand opportunities and challenges. ■ Use related assessment data to improve practices related to parent leadership and advocacy.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide training on the multicultural principles, leadership development, and advocacy for staff and families.
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create an environment that welcomes and affirms parent leadership and advocacy in the program. ■ Work with parents to arrive at agreed upon understandings of how to partner and how to collaborate with each other within the program.
FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide opportunities for parents to identify their strengths as leaders/advocates and to use them in the program and community. ■ Share information with families about existing parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks and/or parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to foster continuity in leadership and advocacy roles beyond Head Start.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide parent mentoring opportunities that could include staff, alumni parents/families, elders, and professionals in the community to serve as a resource and support for parent leadership development. ■ Partner with parents to engage advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family and community needs. ■ Form partnerships with parent-to-parent organizations or other K-12 parent groups to facilitate connections for HS/EHS families.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS—PARENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

- Learned about their opportunities to engage in leadership and /or advocacy activities (eg. policy council).
- Built upon their strengths as leaders and/or advocates through parent-initiated participation in program-supported activities such as advocacy and leadership trainings, parent committees, policy councils, etc.
- Accessed information about existing parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks and/or parent-initiated school-community efforts in order to continue to be leaders/advocates in the community and as their children transition into kindergarten.

2. Actions that Volunteer Early Childhood Advocates Can Take

This piece from S. Goffin & J. Lombardi (1988), *Speaking Out: Early Childhood Advocacy*, describes what individual advocates can do to become advocates for children. For specific activities for NAEYC Affiliates, see *Advocacy Goals for State and Local Affiliates* in Chapter Three: Advocacy by NAEYC Affiliate Groups.

You can choose from many courses of action once you make a commitment to become an advocate for children, their communities, and the early childhood profession. Here are a few choices:

- Share research that supports effective and appropriate practice with teachers and parents.
- Join an organization's public policy committee or agree to respond to a legislative telephone or e-mail tree.
- Write to the editor of a newspaper or magazine to respond to an article or letter.
- Talk with an employer about the needs of working parents, and ask for specific family-friendly policies such as telecommuting, job sharing, time off to attend doctor's appointments and special school events for your child, and other policies that help parents balance work and family requirements.
- Volunteer to join your professional group's advocacy committee to help plan and grow how the group will speak out on the health, social, and educational needs of young children.
- Collect data and research and develop with others a position statement on a critical issue.
- Volunteer to speak at a school board meeting about an NAEYC position statement and explain why the school board should adopt a certain policy.
- Conduct a local or state survey of salaries in early childhood programs.

Conversation Suggestions (DIRECTORS, STAFF)

- Introduce yourself, and thank the Member of Congress and/or staff for meeting with you
- Thank the Member of Congress and/or staff for past support
 - “Thank you for your support for our local work—Congress has a long bipartisan history of supporting Head Start, and up until sequestration, we have been very lucky to have had enough support to maintain our programs and the breadth of service in our community.”
- Talk about Head Start in your community and the specific impact of sequestration or other budget decisions
 - “Last year, we had to cut (# of children, services, partners, facilities, etc)—and it had a huge ripple effect on our community (describe). Nationally, over 57,000 children were cut.
 - We are SO THANKFUL that Congress not only restored funds cut from sequestration, but agreed on new investments in Head Start and Early Head Start to help cope with the rising operating costs—like energy, transportation, and health insurance—which have been eating away at our budget these past few years, and create new opportunities to serve at-risk infants and toddlers through Early Head Start.
 - We are in planning stages now to bring our programs back to financial health—and though it will be a long road, we are so eager to be able to better meet the needs our children and families.
 - Today we’d like to share with you a small reminder of our children and their excitement when they’re in a Head Start classroom.”
- Talk about the importance of maintaining federal funding and the impact of the program
 - “Cutting funding for Head Start and other early learning programs—which reach kids in the critical early years—is a shortsighted economic move. For every \$1 invested in a Head Start child, society gains \$7 in return through increased earnings, employment, and family stability; and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education.
 - In our local program, we have seen countless children go on to success in K-12 schooling [share numbers and any examples of local impact and results]
 - We understand the need for federal deficit reduction and are committed to running cost-effective, accountable, and innovative programs – we continue to streamline every day while costs continue to rise and our waiting lists grow due to the sharp increase in homeless and poverty-stricken families.
 - We ask that you please stand up for our communities and the future of our children and families by continuing investments in early learning, and working towards a permanent fix to sequestration—the only thing worse than letting it happen the first time would be to let it happen again.”
- Thank them for their time and express your willingness to talk further

Conversation Suggestions
(PARENTS, VOLUNTEERS)

- Introduce yourself and your role at the Head Start center, and say a little bit about how many students and families are served
- Congressman/woman/Senator, thank you so much for working to restore the cuts to Head Start and Early Head Start!
- It is such a relief to parents to be able to bring their children to a high quality setting like this—Head Start truly cares about the well-being of the family, and has helped get so many people on track.
- It was very, very tough to implement the sequestration cuts. (Share personal story or knowledge of how sequestration impacted you)
- We are so thankful for your work to support us.
- My son/daughter/student etc benefitted from Head Start—[tell your story]
- And our entire family is now succeeding thanks to the lessons learned here. We're eating healthier, reading together every night, and I'm connected to a program that is training me for a better paying job so I can provide for my children.
- And I'm now involved in the community as an advocate and volunteer—I would not have come so far today without this program
- Head Start has such an impact on our community, especially because our poorest families are impacted from multiple sides— they need employment and education help, assistance for food and housing, and in order to keep their jobs, affordable and safe places to leave their children.
- I am so glad you're able to be here and see what Head Start does first hand.

Traditional Advocacy

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE THE PRESCHOOL PROPOSAL A REALITY. There are countless ways to engage your network in early learning advocacy efforts. Advocacy strategies are not one-size-fits-all; make sure you choose strategies that you know will be successful with your particular network.

Come together for early learning! Here are some traditional advocacy ideas to get you started:



1. Set Up an In-District Meeting

Find out when your Member of Congress will be at home in your district. Reach out to the district office to set up a meeting

with your Senators and Representative. Use this time to show why the Preschool Proposal is so important for your community. Bring local data about gaps in preschool participation, infant and toddler care, or other relevant issues specific to your area.

How-to:

- ✓ Visit www.senate.gov and www.house.gov to identify your Members of Congress
- ✓ Locate the nearest district office by visiting your Member's official website
- ✓ Reach your Member of Congress by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121



TIPS...

...FOR MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. **Do Your Homework:** Research both sides of the issue and be familiar with the opposition's arguments. Make sure you're familiar with any recent developments.
2. **Personalize the Issue:** Sharing a story about how the issue affects real children, families, and friends is an effective way to get through to your legislator.
3. **Present Your Case:** Have a clear idea of what you hope to accomplish through this meeting and be specific about what you'd like your Member of Congress to do.
4. **Leave a Fact Sheet:** Give your legislator information summarizing the issue to look over.
5. **Follow Up:** Send a thank-you note, provide additional materials, and continue to keep in touch with your Member of Congress as new developments take place.



2. Engage Key Stakeholders

Gather together individuals who understand why investment in high-quality early education is so important. Hold a press event, have them sign a letter, or set up a visit with them and a key policymaker.

- *Mission: Readiness* hosts events which bring together retired generals and admirals who show support for state-federal early childhood investments as a matter of national security. They recently released a new report on prekindergarten and national security. More here: www.missionreadiness.org/2013/earlychildhood.
- For the 2013 Early Learning Day of Action, the New York Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) Coalition put together a very successful event. They invited Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Mayor Thomas Richards of Rochester, the local Head Start CEO, and the CEO of Rochester Childfirst to speak at a local high-quality center. Each individual spoke about a different aspect of high-quality early learning. The ECDI coalition provided the press with packets that included a background sheet on the Coalition's work, a press release with a quote from each participant, the [Strong Start for Children Campaign's Principles](#), and a fact sheet on the Preschool Proposal. The event helped to garner local press and can easily be replicated in other areas.



3. Arrange a Visit

Arrange for an elected official to visit a local high-quality preschool classroom or child care center. Show the official how beneficial the program is to enrolled children, and make the case for expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Tips:

- ✓ Check the Congressional calendar to see when your Members of Congress are on recess in their home district.
- ✓ Select a site with a diverse group of children and enthusiastic directors.
- ✓ Ensure your legislator has the chance to interact with children.

For the 2013 Early Learning Day of Action, advocates invited Congressman Rush Holt to visit a high-quality preschool program in Trenton, New Jersey. There, he made the connection between the need for more classrooms like the one he was visiting and the Preschool Proposal.

For more: www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2013/05/rush_holt_visits_trenton_devel.html.



4. Do an Advocacy Drop

Gather letters, crafts, artwork, or signatures on a petition expressing support for the Preschool Proposal to deliver to your Representative's and/or Senators' offices. Consider bringing children and families to make the drop personal for the staff members receiving the items.

After the President announced his plan to expand preschool in his budget, the Strong Start for Children campaign collected thank-you notes from children, teachers, parents, and advocates across the country. Members of the campaign delivered more than 30,000 thank-you letters and pieces of artwork to the White House as a strong show of grassroots support. A drop like this can be replicated on a smaller scale for a delivery to a local policymaker.

- When they get someone on the phone, say:
"Hi my name is _____ and I'm a constituent. I would like to urge Senator/Representative _____ to expand investments in high-quality early learning opportunities for young children by supporting the Proposal to expand access to high-quality preschool."



9. Use Your Newsletter

If you have an existing newsletter or other method of communication with your network, use it to share information about the Preschool Proposal and upcoming advocacy events.



10. Place an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

Find influential individuals who are supportive of the Preschool Proposal to author an opinion piece or letter to the editor for a local, regional, or national news outlet. Use state and local data when possible. (See the Advocacy Resources section for samples and tips.)



11. Get on the Agenda

Find out when local groups such as the *Kiwanis*, *Rotary*, *Lions clubs*, *Chamber of Commerce*, *Parent Teacher Associations*, and other organizations are meeting. Reach out to them to be put on the agenda for their next meeting to rally support for the Proposal.

ADVOCATES HAVE ORGANIZED SUCCESSFUL EVENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY—GET INSPIRED BY SOME OF THEIR CREATIVE IDEAS!



MEDIA TIPS

- Invite members of the local and regional press to any advocacy events you are planning.
- Send out a press release featuring quotes from the speakers during or immediately after any events you host.



12. Work with Education Leaders

Join with other stakeholders such as superintendents, school principals, teacher unions, K-12 advocacy groups, kindergarten teachers, and others to organize joint events or co-author op-eds to promote the value of high-quality preschool.



13. Collect Stories

Work with early elementary school, prekindergarten, Head Start, and child care teachers, as well as home visitors to collect stories about the impact of high-quality early learning programs on young children. Send them to the Strong Start for Children campaign at www.nwlc.org/prek and share with your members of Congress.

Online Advocacy

MORE AND MORE ADVOCACY IS TAKING PLACE ONLINE.

The Internet allows for easy collaboration and dialogue among advocates, stakeholders, and policymakers. Not sure where to start? Let us help!

1. Facebook

This social media site is great for spreading the word about events, publicizing the facts on early learning, and sharing resources.

- Posting graphics on Facebook can communicate a simple message to a broad audience and make the case for early learning. Post these graphics on your page and encourage your friends to share!
- The *National Women's Law Center* routinely posts about early learning and encourages others to share the content it creates on their own pages. Check out NWLC's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/nwlc.

2. Twitter

Use this social media site to create and continue conversations about early learning. Individuals and organizations tweeting about the Preschool Proposal are using the hashtag #PreKForAll to talk about the importance of high-quality early learning experiences.

- *Commonly used early learning hashtags:*
#PreKForAll
#ece
#earlyed

