



# Tips for Creating District-Wide School Psychology Newsletters

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Developing a school psychology newsletter for stakeholders in your school system is an excellent communication tool. It helps to further establish our value and relevance by raising the awareness of who we are and what we can offer. In addition, a newsletter is a tool to promote research-based best practices that enhance the skill set of stakeholders while directly benefiting children. Here are some tips for how you can get a school psychology newsletter started in your school district.

## GET STARTED

***Form a team of school psychologists to develop the newsletters.*** Putting the newsletters together is too much work for one person; it takes a group effort to make it happen. For small school districts with a limited number of school psychologists, it may be beneficial to join with other departments (e.g., school counselors, school social workers, etc.) to develop the newsletters.

***Learn the administrative approval process and distribution requirements of your school district.***

***Develop a logo.*** An attractive logo is a great way to enhance visibility and awareness. It quickly communicates that products were developed by school psychologists. Your logo should be placed in a prominent spot on the front of the newsletter.

***Create a consistent format and structure for the newsletter.*** Use the same color scheme and layout; make sure this is visually appealing. Have running topics or sections. Examples include: Clinical Corner, Reflection Section, Did You Know?, Teacher Tips, Resources on the Web, Executive Skills, etc. All of this helps to create familiarity and predictability for you and the reader. It guides the reader to key points of interest and provides a structure to ease the writing process for each subsequent edition.

***Decide how many issues you will publish.*** Start small and build from there. Be reasonable about the time you have to commit to this effort.

***Create an editorial calendar.*** Map out the content in each of your newsletters, assign responsibility to team members, and establish deadlines. The more newsletters you publish each year, the more important it is to have an editorial calendar.

## DEVELOP CONTENT

***Know your intended audience.*** Tailor your articles or recommendations to meet the needs of the reader. Oftentimes, content can be easily adapted to be used for different audiences (e.g., parents, elementary level teachers, secondary level teachers, etc.).

***Use simple language and sentence structure.*** This is meant to be an easy read. Refrain from jargon.

***Keep articles short and directly to the point.*** The newsletter should be no more than a couple of pages. Thus, articles need to be concise (about 3 or 4 paragraphs) with only the pertinent information you want your reader to take away.

***Create articles that support identified areas of focus for your school system or community.*** Not only does this help keep your newsletter relevant to what is going on around you, it increases your standing as a team player working in unison with stakeholders.

***Each article should contain usable, relatively easy-to-do recommendations.*** While many of us may be intrigued by the theoretical basis behind a certain topic, most people simply want to know what to do; and they will more likely do it if it does not appear overly difficult and time-consuming.

***Insert a cartoon.*** People like humor. Many people will open up the newsletter to check out the cartoon and then subsequently read an article that catches their interest.

***Use NASP-created resources.*** The vast majority of school psychologists simply do not have enough time to research topics and create articles from scratch. Fortunately, we do not need to do this. There are many resources available from NASP (e.g., NASP's Helping Children at School and Home II: Handouts for Families and Educators) that provide information that can easily be adapted into newsletter articles. Consider materials available at <http://www.nasponline.org/communications/index.aspx>.

***Collect articles from colleagues throughout the school year.*** Many school psychologists write a short article or tips section to place in their school's newsletter. Others provide lists of recommendations to address specific concerns. Ask for a copy of these articles or lists to use in the newsletter. Likewise, many school psychologists give presentations or in-services over the course of the school year. Ask these colleagues to write a short article summing up the key points of their presentation with recommendations about how to address the issue.

## HIGHLIGHT YOUR SERVICES

***Define the role of school psychologists and services offered.*** Use the first issue of the newsletter as a means to tell others exactly who we are and how we can help them. Utilizing parts of the NASP brochure, What is a School Psychologist, is perfect for this.

***Directly identify and provide information regarding the school psychologist(s) serving each specific school.*** While it is beneficial to increase awareness of school psychologists in general, it is perhaps more important to increase the awareness of specific individual school psychologists within their assigned school community. This provides a clear avenue to the reader for reaching an actual

person who can offer the services we have indicated. In each newsletter, have a section (e.g., My School Psychologist) that school psychologists can fill out on their own. This allows school psychologists to identify themselves and provide contact information (e.g., days available at a school, phone number, e-mail, etc.).

***Provide a link to your district's school psychology website.***

## NAIL DOWN THE FINAL PIECES

***Acquire administrator buy-in at the school level.*** School psychologists should schedule a time to meet with their school principal to perform a needs assessment. During this process, show the principal a copy of the newsletter and get their buy-in. Determine the best way to distribute newsletters to the school community.

***Have others review the newsletters.*** Nothing destroys the value of your work more than misspellings or grammatical errors. Have others check your work.

***Elicit feedback from your audience.*** There is no way to know the impact of your product if you do not gain feedback from those using it. This can form the basis for determining content or making changes to the format.

***Make use of available technology for distribution.*** It can be a very time-consuming and expensive job to print out and/or mail newsletters to stakeholders. Through the use of technology, we can dispense the newsletter at the click of a button and have it available for others to browse on the Web at any time they wish.

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