GUIDE TO GETTING OUT YOUR MESSAGE

National Education Goals Panel Members: 1993-94

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The Public Must Be Engaged

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The National Education Goals and the movement to set standards represent a fundamental change in the business of teaching and learning - a revolution of expectations for students and the systems that support learning. The engine of this revolution is the recognition that achievement is as much a function of expectation and effort as it is of ability.

For reforms based on Goals and standards to succeed, members of the community will need to come to expect that all students can perform at higher levels and to believe that the system can be redesigned to achieve this result.

But changing attitudes is not enough. Consider, for example, a candidate for political office whose campaign succeeds at getting voters to like her, but does not succeed at getting voters to take a specific action - going to the polls and voting for her on election day! She may have affected public opinion. But, she did not affect public behavior in a specific enough manner to get elected, which was the prime result she hoped to achieve.

The same is true when it comes to earning support for education reform. While the joining of forces to create the Goals holds considerable promise in establishing a climate needed to improve education, the Goals cannot be realized if the general public is not mobilzed to act.

Only by changing the attitudes and behavior of community members will it be possible to reach the National Education Goals. This is effective public engagement.

Three Components to Generate Consensus and Change Behavior

There is a vast difference between making the public generally aware of an issue or concern and achieving a more sophisticated level of informed public opinion necessary to reach consensus, then mobilize action.

Public opinion research shows broad support for education goals and standards, but points to a huge gap between what citizens and "experts" define as the problems and solutions facing U.S. education. The public is increasingly frustrated by the slow pace of change and even more skeptical about prospects for progress, because they feel insufficiently involved in the discussion and decisions being made by many national, state, and local leaders in the education policy and governance arenas.

Focus group research conducted by the National Education Goals Panel showed that while the public is positive, even enthusiastic, about the need for National Education Goals and standards, people feel alienated from the process of developing and using the Goals to shape what and how U.S. students should learn. (For additional information on recent public opinion research, refer to the Guide to Goals and Standards.)

In most cases, people cannot be mobilized until they are committed to an issue, and they cannot make a commitment without sufficient information to make decisions. Public engagement strategies are based on a progression through these steps. An effective public engagement strategy requires clear and consistent communications, patience, persistence, and trust in the democratic process. With the right knowledge, environment, and tools, citizens can and will make the "right" choices.

Empowering our nation to accomplish the National Education Goals, or local community goals, requires a three-step approach that goes beyond providing the public with accurate information.

Step 1: INFORM
Increase knowledge and understanding of the National Education Goals and the need for systemic reform. Raise awareness about the complexities of issues in order to reach a more informed level of public opinion.

Step 2: BUILD COMMITMENT
Arouse concern and a sense of urgency to help generate consensus and build commitment on the need to reach the Goals in your community.

Step 3: MOBILIZE ACTION
Motivate, empower, and organize concerned and dedicated citizens to take specific actions needed to bring about true and sweeping change in the many systems that support teaching and learning in the United States.

Communicating for Change

The success of any initiative -- in matters ranging from public policy to interpersonal dynamics -- is directly related to the success with which it is communicated.

For a community to be well-organized to achieve educational improvement goals, its communications strategy must be an engine, not a caboose.

Communications is a central leadership and management function, requiring a two-way flow of information. It is just as important to listen as it is to share opinions and information. If you are not plugged in to the grapevine, it will be hard to design a strategy that meets community needs and even more difficult to evaluate the success of your communications.

Whether it is called public relations, public affairs or social marketing, a sound strategy requires:

* The planned use of actions and communications to inform public opinion and influence the attitudes and behaviors of important publics and key decision-makers.
* An appropriate message targeted to specific groups or individuals to achieve specific goals.
* Two-way flow of information to help evaluate the success of an initiative and modify or adapt accordingly.

The Nature of Change

It has been said that "everyone wants progress, but no one wants change." Changing jobs, homes, eating habits, or anything else never seems to be an easy process, a fact well known to professional marketers.

Market research shows that certain percentages of people accept a new product, idea, or service:

QUICKLY	15%
AFTER OTHERS LIKE IT	75%
NEVER	10%

Of course, "marketing" the concept of school change is not the same as selling a product. But you should concentrate on gaining the involvement of the 15 percent of people typically open to new ideas - and ask them to help involve the other 75 percent.

Gaining involvement is not a linear process. It depends on rather subjective elements of human nature. So don't ignore the 75 percent while concentrating on the 15. Nor should you ignore the 10 percent who are unlikely to support Goals-related reforms. They may become actively opposed to your efforts and "compete" for the middle 75.

In addition, try not to spend too much time responding to the requests, accusations, or unwelcome actions of the 10 percent who may actively oppose your change efforts - or you may be unable to adequately serve the needs of the majority.

(Adapted from "How to Communicate about Outcomes and School Change," by Marjorie Ledell and Jennifer Wallace of the High Success Network.)

How Opinions and Decisions Lead to Action

The success of every communications or organizing strategy will be increased by taking time to understand the stages people go through as they learn about an issue, think about the consequences of action or inaction, and decide what should be done.

The Public Agenda Foundation, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization which specializes in public opinion research and citizen education, has identified a seven-stage journey through which the public travels to resolve complex issues.

Stage One- People Become Aware of an Issue. At this early stage, it is important to raise consciousness through such activities as media relations, special events, or advocacy group work. Most people remain largely unaware of the socioeconomic conditions driving the movement for education goals and standards. (See the Guide to Goals and Standards.) They may not yet recognize that there is no "going back to basics" in education: we must go forward to a set of "new basics" required for success in today's increasingly complex and competitive global economy.

Stage Two- People Develop a Sense of Urgency. This often occurs when a problem hits close to home or when the citizenry is convinced of the absolute gravity or peril of a situation. "My children may not be able to get into a good college or get a decent job if we don't make some serious changes in our local education and training system." Or, "I don't know which immunizations my child needs before he can start school and whether or not my health plan will cover the expense." During this stage of public opinion, it is wise to explain the implications of an issue in the context of public concerns.

Stage Three- People Look for Answers. When people accept that significant change may be needed to speed progress toward education goals, they become eager for answers and will seek

them out. People will begin to convert their free-floating concern about the need to do something into proposals for action. Policymakers will try to address issues of priority. This might be the time to hold a community meeting to discuss the consequences, costs, and risks of specific policies and plans.

Stage Four- Resistance! This will be the most difficult stage for communications strategists and community organizers. The public will be reluctant to face the trade-offs that come from choosing a specific plan of action. Resistance is heightened and may seem insurmountable when people feel excluded from the decision-making process on matters that affect their daily lives. You will likely encounter several common types of resistance:

> Misunderstanding: "Standards will lead to standardization - or worse yet, a national curriculum."
>
> Narrow thinking: "A little more money and a lot more discipline is what schools need to improve."
>
> Wishful thinking: "This is a breeze. Once we set high standards for all our students to achieve, everything else in the system will fall into place."
>
> Conflicting values: "How do I know that the standards being considered for our schools reflect the values I believe in and practice at home?"
>
> Personal resistance to change: "Go ahead. Set high standards, but don't expect me to change what I'm doing at home or school."

The best way to avoid resistance is to ensure that everybody is involved in the process and all that their concerns have been heard.

Stage Five- People Begin to Weigh Choices. After moving beyond initial resistance to change, people begin to weigh their choices rationally and balance various alternatives related to achieving education goals or adopting a standards-based reform plan. At this stage, the public should feel they have a range of choices and a reason to make them. Leadership has a responsibility to clarify the pros and cons of each decision, to offer compromises, and to allow time and opportunity for deliberation.

Stage Six- Intellectual Acceptance. At this stage, most people undergo a basic change in attitudes. They come to a reasoned understanding of the need for a specific action or policy, but may not be willing to change their personal behavior. Be patient. Don't expect too much, too soon. And be careful in interpreting public opinion polls _ you may expect more than you can get at this point.

Stage Seven- Full Acceptance. Given time, incentives, and opportunities to consider their core values in light of the challenges and needs, most people will come to a point where they have full, pure intellectual and emotional acceptance of the need to set high standards for all students and create a system of lifelong teaching and learning. Now is the best time to make sure that there is a role for everyone in carrying out the community action plan to achieve education goals.

Asking the Right Questions

A good communications strategist will ask questions early in the design and planning process of an initiative.

Far too often, organizations look to the communications team for a "bailout" in times of crisis. This can be avoided by establishing a credible and proactive strategy that addresses internal and external needs. Take the time to answer the questions and validate the results.

* Who are we trying to reach? The success of your initiative could rest upon the actions or decisions of one particular individual or the entire electorate. Be as surgical as possible in identifying priority "publics," and learn more about their needs and concerns. What is on their minds? How do they make their concerns known? What kind of relationships do you have with them?

* What do we want that person or group of people to do? Be specific. Are you trying to raise awareness, build commitment, or motivate action? Use plain and simple language to describe the results to achieve. Know when, where, and how you want a particular action or sequence of activities to occur.

* What information do our target audiences need? Having clarified the intended results, consider what knowledge or information each different priority public requires to take the action or adopt the attitudes you consider vital. Do citizens know and understand the community education goals? Do they possess the information needed to make wise decisions? If not, what can you do to speed the learning curve and provide easy access to additional people, publications, or other media? Whom do they trust? Equally important, consider where and how each target audience readily obtains information. What are their most reliable sources?

* What message will net the change in attitude or behavior that we seek? Again, specificity is key to success. If you want someone to cast a "yes" vote on a local referendum, then say so. If you want people to attend a meeting, provide them with the time and location so they can arrive on time. It is also important to consider carefully the language you use. Avoid jargon and professional "educationese" at all cost. Instead of relying on verbal shorthand to communicate complicated concepts, challenge your vocabulary and express points with clarity and brevity.

* What is the best way to get our message to each of the target audiences we seek to influence? What media or techniques will be most effective? Where and how often do people in your target audiences gather? How do they send and receive information? From television interviews and newspaper articles to the notes children bring home from school or the door-to-door visits in a canvassing campaign, there are a variety of communications vehicles at your command. Both news media and grass-roots channels can generate the support you need to make lasting education reform possible. Communicating through news media provides access to almost all target audiences and carries a good deal of authority. Grass-roots tactics allow a more customized message to be communicated through the people your target audiences trust.

* How well did your strategy work? It is vital to build in a mechanism for feedback so you can evaluate the communication strategy and modify it as needed. How did each target audience react to the message or technique? How might you respond to unanticipated questions or concerns? Perhaps the message was right but the communications vehicle was inappropriate. How will you incorporate what you have learned from past experience into future plans?

CRAFTING MESSAGES

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Powerful messages are at the core of powerful campaigns. While crafting a message to promote change in education is not the same as selling soap or cars, it does help to use some techniques of salesmanship. Just as advertisers reach buyers through memorable slogans and catchy phrases, organizers of community campaigns to adopt education goals or standards-based reform must develop succinct and quotable messages that set the right tone and convey the importance of their work.

What Makes a Message Memorable?

To gain public support for community initiatives aimed at achieving the National Education Goals, your messages must be clear, direct, and personal. If you can't articulate the message, then you can't expect the result or change that you desire.

Use facts to support and justify a message. Most audiences are persuaded when they see evidence to support your claims or concerns. Find information that lends credence to your argument and creates a sense of urgency. By adopting the "Goals Process," your community will have a means of measuring and monitoring progress toward its education goals - and will have valuable data to incorporate in campaign messages. (Refer to the Guide to Goals and Standards or the Community Organizing Guide for more information on the "Goals Process.")

Essential Steps in the "Goals Process"

* Adopting the National Education Goals or similar goals that reflect high expectations for all and cover the entire breadth of focus from prenatal care to lifelong learning.
* Assessing current strengths and weaknesses and building a strong accountability system to regularly measure and report on progress towards the goals over time.
* Setting specific performance benchmarks to mark progress along the way and guide the change process.
* Identifying the barriers to and opportunities for goal attainment in the many systems that support teaching and learning.
* Creating and mounting strategies to overcome the barriers, seizing the opportunities, and meeting the performance benchmark.
* Making a long-term commitment to working towards the goals and continuously reevaluating your accomplishments and shortcomings and modifying your strategy as needed.

Use "real-life" examples. Share an anecdote about a real-life situation to which most people can relate, and they are more likely to respond favorably to your message. Short, personal accounts and stories that get right to the point will build interest and provide unassailable testimony.

Develop succinct and quotable talking points that capture the essence of your message. Given the time and space constraints facing the news media, you can either express your message in short, concise sentences - or find that reporters and editors will make the decision for you as to what is the most important and salient information.

Tap into the big-picture issues people are talking about. Show how efforts to achieve education goals address the concerns friends and neighbors have - whether it is creating jobs, curtailing crime, or opening doors of opportunity for young people.

Be positive. Research shows that the public is more likely to support changes in education if they are presented in a positive light.

Know the debate. Know the issues. Study the messages of your allies and opponents - not to "divide and conquer," but to better understand the points that they are making and address and/or incorporate them into your work.

Know your audience. Think carefully about whom you are trying to reach or motivate, and what media will reach them best, and then tailor the message accordingly. In campaigns to build support or organize for education goals, typical target audiences include:

* Parents
* Educators
* Students
* Business leaders
* Labor leaders
* Church and civic groups
* Media
* Social service/health agencies
* Higher education
* Child care community
* Adult literacy groups

Draw upon research. Use polling and survey data or findings from focus groups to learn more about the issues and the views of your target audiences. Also, review past media coverage _ particularly the editorial and news coverage in your state and community on education and economic productivity issues. Consider carefully what works and what doesn't and apply that analysis to your own message design.

Test and refine messages. In-person and telephone surveys and polls, focus groups, and panel discussions are among the techniques used to hone in on the strengths and weaknesses of campaign messages. Contact the marketing or communications department at a local college or university for guidance in applying these techniques. (The Community Organizing Guide also provides valuable tips for conducting surveys.)

The public must be persuaded that it is in their best interest to improve education for all. Every speech, interview, meeting, or piece of information with which you or your group is associated sends a specific message - some positive, some negative, some intended, and some unintentional - to your target audiences. Spend the necessary time and effort to tailor and test messages aimed at netting specific results, and your community campaign will meet community needs.

Sample Messages

If We Have Standards for Teddy Bears...

> In this country, we expect that the food we eat, the cars we drive, even the toys our children play with meet a mandatory standard of quality and safety. Yet, most parents send their children to

schools that have no agreed-upon standards of quality. The National Education Goals and the movement to develop voluntary national standards for student achievement provide these long-needed assurances that all our students will meet the highest levels of accomplishment.

The Need for Standards

Olympic competitions illustrate the power of performance standards. To earn high marks in an event such as figure skating, the contestants must know the number of successful triple jumps, combinations, and stylistic elements required for a world-class performance. Figure skaters cannot improve their performance without knowing what standards of excellence are expected. Neither can our students, schools, and school systems improve their performance without a clear understanding of what constitutes academic excellence in every subject area.

Preserving Our Democracy

Since the days of Thomas Jefferson, our system of government has depended on a citizenry that is educated enough to make informed choices and to hold public institutions accountable. As technology improves the quality and quantity of information available, citizens will require higher levels of skill and knowledge to process this information.

Education is also central to helping our nation address its increasing diversity. National Education Goals and standards will help ensure that our diverse and mobile population can both preserve its heritage, while developing a sense of national identity and gaining the shared knowledge and values necessary to make democracy work.

Our Education Industry - Back on Top

In the early 1980s, U.S. automobile manufactures realized that they had fallen far behind their competitors in Japan and Germany. In order to survive, the Big Three devoted the next ten years to retooling their industry, investing in technology, streamlining production, and developing new management strategies and operating procedures. By setting higher standards, U.S. car makers are back on top and better positioned for the future.

Now it's time for U.S. citizens to do for education _ the vehicle that drives our economy _ what automobile manufacturers did for cars.

Performance Counts

In today's competitive and complicated world, children need a better education than we received, yet too often they get less. The National Education Goals are a public commitment to our children that they will have what it takes to succeed in this environment. The Goals can help us set priorities so that all children come to school ready to learn and leave school prepared for college, employment, and citizenship.

Governments Don't Teach Children

Governments don't teach children. Parents and teachers do. But governments owe it to parents, teachers, and their local communities to create a vision of what constitutes world-class educational performance. You know your kids - and community - better than anyone else. By using the National Education Goals as a road map for educational improvement, you can choose the paths to follow to reach the Goals.

GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNICATIONS

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Understanding Grass -roots Communications

Despite the power of high technology, face-to-face communication still can be the most convincing way to make your concerns about education goals and standards a "kitchen table" issue. When people talk about the issues of your campaign in their homes and offices or on the streets, they can explore new ideas, share in each other's visions, and come closer to consensus.

While newspapers and television appearances can make people aware of issues, the personalized, human approach is more persuasive when it comes to addressing individual questions and concerns. Enlist the participation of individuals who are trusted, well-known, and respected. People often are influenced by what their friends and neighbors consider important or valid.
(For more information on grass-roots communications strategies and involvement in the "Goals Process," refer to the Community Organizing Guide.)

Holding Team Meetings

Rather than relying entirely on chance conversations, good grass-roots strategists organize regular gatherings to build support for the community campaign and to help spread the word.

Regular team meetings also present opportunities to recruit new members. Advertise meetings or send news releases to local media. Create fliers for posting at local stores, libraries, offices, or schools. Ask school leaders if they can provide notices for students to take home to parents. See if the local convenience store or supermarket will drop a flier in with each customer's purchase.

At the meeting, welcome new faces. Make sure no one leaves without giving his or her name, address, phone number, and FAX number. Place follow-up calls a few days later to thank participants for coming and ask for reactions or comments.

Hold meetings in different areas. Look for places where community members already come together. This helps to show that your team is concerned with everyone and all areas of the community. Some communities have strong neighborhood loyalties, and community meetings that are held only in one school's auditorium may not gain their confidence.

A sample speech is included in the "Tips and Materials" section of this guide which you may consider using at meetings or other presentations to which you are invited.

Building A Database

If you have access to a personal computer, invest in an easy-to-use database package to store and manage lists for mailings and meetings or to track information for inclusion in a local goals report. If your organization does not have readily available computing power - either at a central business location or through one of the members of your coalition - it is important to keep track of lists and other information the good old-fashioned way. Create inventory forms such as those included in the "Tips and Materials" section of this guide, and be sure to update materials often.

Making Presentations to Other Organizations

In most communities, there are several organizations currently engaged in support of public education. These include such groups as the parent-teacher association, teachers union, local business organizations or chambers of commerce, civic groups, volunteer agencies, religious organizations, and health care providers.

Contact the heads of each organization and ask for a few moments to address the group's next meeting. Learn more about their current Goals-related activities and make sure to stress how important it is for their membership and yours to work together on a community action plan to adopt the "Goals Process."

The meeting will provide an opportunity to inform the public about the "Goals Process," the strategies your team is pursuing, and how others can get involved. Bring copies of the National Education Goals and other handouts included in the Community Action Toolkit to the meeting. Make sure to collect the names, addresses, phone numbers, and FAX numbers of participants. Circulate a sign-up sheet or pass out index cards with instructions for each person to write down their contact information and priority education concerns.

In delivering remarks, try to connect with the special concerns of the audience and use examples to illustrate key points. Try the math exercise in the Guide to Goals and Standards to demonstrate the importance of having clearly articulated and high standards for student performance. Leave plenty of time for questions and answers, and never leave a presentation without making sure the assembled know how and where to contact you for follow-up.

Working with Community Leaders

Every community has business, spiritual, civic, and political leaders. Convince them to support the "Goals Process," and they can help persuade others to join the effort. Schedule individual meetings with these leaders to explain what your group is trying to do for education and other learning support systems. Outline a few specific actions they could undertake. Religious leaders could mention the Goals in sermons. Political leaders might join the coalition or address your concerns in their platforms and policy initiatives. Draw connections between your priorities and the leader's. Explain why improving education is important to their constituency. Share with the leader the results of your community survey or the data you are tracking as part of the "Goals Process." If a leader is not immediately interested in your Goals - and standards-related education improvement plan, try to keep the lines of communication open. Even if they don't support you now, regular communication may deter later attacks.

Hosting Special Events

Large numbers of people can be reached in a very positive way through well-conceived, well executed special events. Parades, picnics, flea markets, street fairs, food tastings, bake sales - members of your organization can use these events to spread information about the National Education Goals and promising or effective strategies to improve student learning. These events can also generate news coverage.

When setting up a booth or exhibit:

* Use an easy-to-read, eye-catching sign that gives a clear message.
* Include bright colors, movement, and lights to attract people to the display.
* Provide give-aways - free literature, bumper stickers, or novelties. For example, distribute copies of the National Education Goals or your local goals report.
* Staff the booth or exhibit with informed, personable volunteers who will encourage conversation with visitors.
* Rotate the volunteers regularly.

Other ideas for special events include:

* An American Education Week celebration in November.
* Banquets honoring accomplishments of local citizens and leaders supporting the Goals.
* Conferences on local issues or each of the eight National Education Goals.
* Participate in the monthly TV seminars on the National Education Goals. (Call 1-800-9-8GOALS for more information.)
* Convene a local "downlink" site for the Goals 2000 satellite town meetings sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

Careful timing of special events is essential. Timing variables may include:

* Guest speaker availability.
* Season of the year (outdoor events).
* Competition with other major events.

SPECIAL EVENTS CHECKLIST

Planning

____ Choose an effective planning committee.
____ Prepare a detailed budget for the event.
____ Arrange the best date (with an appropriate time without major conflicting events).
____ Consider media deadlines.
____ Set a tentative master timetable.

Speakers

____ Set fee and expenses.
____ Obtain resumes and photographs.
____ Confirm speakers.
____ Plan itinerary.
____ Select hospitality people.
____ Get clear understanding of restrictions on news conferences, broadcast rights, and so forth.
____ Provide lodging.
____ Arrange transportation.

Advance Promotion

____ Make mailing lists of those interested in the event.
____ Set up mailing facilities and schedule.
____ Produce invitations and media advisories.
____ Mail invitations and media advisories.

Special Publications

____ Prepare printed program, establishing cost, copy, layout, and delivery date.
____ Prepare a promotional brochure.
____ Design and produce posters.
____ Have tickets printed.

Facilities/Personnel

____ Choose the site and room(s) based on estimated attendance.
____ Make sure that facilities are available.
____ Check audience sight lines.
____ Check lighting, ventilation, and acoustics.
____ Learn location of electrical outlets and light switches.
____ Confirm that rest rooms and cloak rooms are available.

____ Make food service arrangements; select menu.
____ Arrange for public address system.
____ Have audiovisual aids (screen, charts, easels) available.
____ Alert security or police.

____ **Registration table**

Arrange for the following:
____ Signs (including alphabetical breakdown)
____ Tables and chairs
____ Name badges
____ Pads and pencils
____ Typewriter
____ Cash box
____ Telephone
____ Program and other literature
____ People to staff the registration table
____ Security

Other

____ Prepare a coordinating sheet, assigning every job and detailing timing.
____ Arrange for parking facilities.
____ Set up signs.
____ Order flowers and decorations.
____ Assign ushers or guides.
____ Arrange for first aid facilities.

Public Information: Advance

____ Obtain photos of speakers and copies of speeches.
____ Make media calls to alert reporters.
____ Arrange for a media room and a special space for media.
____ Set up a news conference if appropriate.
____ Arrange media interviews in advance.

Public Information: At Event

____ Staff media room, if needed.
____ Provide copies of speeches, if available.
____ Direct the photographer to obtain a picture for post-publicity, newsletter, and archives.
____ Tape speeches, if appropriate.

Public Information: After Event

____ Send out a news release with a copy of speech and photos.
____ Contact radio station with actualities from speeches.

Evaluations

____ Send thank-you notes.
____ Complete financial accounting.
____ Compile a report on all aspects of an event. Critique errors and make recommendations for the future.

Budget

____ Printing (invitations, reply cards, program, other promotional material).
____ Mailing (postage, mailing services, secretarial assistance).
____ Gifts for speakers and mementos for guests.
____ Decorations (flower arrangements and corsages, table decorations, plants for decorating room and stage, other).
____ Catering and facility charges (meals, coffee breaks, receptions, room charges, other).
____ Physical plant costs (cleaning of building, care of grounds, set-up of lectern, chairs, lights, tables, etc., positioning of banners, special equipment, rental of sound system, rental of equipment, chairs, tents, etc.).
____ Speaker expenses (hotel costs, meal and other personal expenses, transportation, honoraria, other).
____ Special services/miscellaneous [manufacturing of plaques or awards, security, photographer, taping (video and audio) for archives, museums].

Increasing Visibility

Contact school administrators, teachers, or union representatives to co-host events at local schools, distribute material at back-to-school nights, or include information in report card mailings. Work with local business groups and merchants to post details about your meetings and offer literature about the education goals campaign on their counters where patrons can take them. Doctors, dentists, and hospitals may also welcome materials in their waiting rooms for patients to read.

Leaflets, Brochures, and Fact Sheets

Leaflets, brochures, and fact sheets can be produced relatively quickly to get out information to the community.

Leaflets need to attract the reader's attention immediately and get the point across simply. Be brief. Select an eye-catching headline and drop-in a graphic illustration from "clip art" books or software packages. Use big and bold print and easy-to-reproduce standard-sized paper. People should be able to scan the message as they pause by a bulletin board or in the time it takes to walk from the distribution point to the nearest trash can! Design a leaflet as you would a poster - eye-catching and instantly understandable. Leaflets are used to get people to act or to inform them. State your position on an issue, explain the "Goals Process," clarify a situation in which you have been misrepresented. Or, notify the public about special events, such as the new series of daytime TV seminars on the National Education Goals. (Call 1-800-9-8GOALS for more information.)

One variety of leaflet is the fact sheet. Fact sheets generally contain more information than leaflets and have a somewhat longer life than the typical leaflet.

Brochures are usually more expensive, multi-page publications printed in color on heavy or glossy paper. Be sure that the purpose and useful life of a brochure really justify the cost and effort. Brochures are especially good handouts when you want to make a strong and favorable first impression - when speaking to an influential community group, for example, or exploring an issue that requires thorough treatment.

Canvassing and Recruiting

Going door-to-door is another way to recruit support and volunteers, communicate the importance of the "Goals Process," and learn more about the opinions of neighbors and fellow citizens.
When organizing colleagues to go knocking on doors, make sure they:
Schedule visits for the weekend or early evening when people are at home.

Travel in pairs. At least one of the canvassers should be a resident in the neighborhood or come from the same background as other residents.

Wear identification. Canvassers should have a highly visible way of identifying themselves. For example, they could wear special tee shirts or buttons with a community goals and standards campaign logo.

Have a goal in mind. Canvassers should seek to convince people to take action, sign a petition, attend or arrange a block discussion session, or attend a community meeting.

Bring brochures, news clips, fact sheets, and other user-friendly material that explains more about the National Education Goals, your local organization, the ways you are working to improve education, and what individuals can do. See for example the checklists for parents, educators and business, or labor leaders in the Community Organizing Guide.

Be prepared to talk about your group's accomplishments. Ideally, canvassers should have been involved in previous events and be able to talk about their experiences. If not, they should be familiar with the National Education Goals, the "Goals Process," and data from local goals reports or surveys.

Know how to take "no" for an answer. A large number of neighbors inevitably will refuse to become involved, even after the importance of your efforts has been explained. In this case, simply thank them for their time. Never argue with a resident when you are canvassing.

Identify supporters, opponents, and the undecided. The undecided people should be called a few days later to ask if they have any questions after reading the materials. Invite them to your next meeting or host a special gathering for interested parties to learn more about the "Goals Process."

Keep records. Make sure to keep track of the people you have talked to so you don't return to them again with the same request. Store information in a database and call back those who support your efforts.

Telephone Banks and Telephone Chains

Telephone banks are an effective tool for increasing attendance at an event or conducting a quick poll. A phone bank works best when a few members can gather in a central location away from home - callers are more likely to enjoy the experience and can more easily share information and tips when they are working together at the same site. Business or civic groups with a number of phones in one location may be willing to offer their facilities so your team can make local calls after business hours.

A less expensive alternative for reaching a smaller number of people is to establish a phone chain where each member agrees to call three other members to deliver an important or timely message. (An example of a phone chain is located in the "Handouts" section of this guide.)

The chain should be set up so that the person initiating the message calls a small group (such as the leadership team), the leadership team calls other active members, and the active members call everyone else. Check with the last person in the chain to make sure that the message went through. There should also be a bypass mechanism so that someone who is out of town doesn't break the whole chain. Participants should agree that if they cannot reach the next person on the telephone chain, they should select an alternate to make that person's calls.

Circulate copies of the phone chain at meetings so that new members know how they may be contacted and can participate in an important organizational structure. Leaders will find the phone chain to be a quick and reliable means of getting in touch with membership without having to call each person directly.

MEDIA RELATIONS

MEDIA RELATIONS

"With enough publicity, even the most difficult task of consciousness raising can be achieved . . . For consciousness raising, one must perform two basic tasks: make the public aware of an issue and arouse their concern that something must be done about it."
- Public Opinion Analyst Daniel Yankelovich

Understanding News Media

One of the best ways to influence public opinion is to influence the news and information that people rely upon in making decisions. News media help inform and influence all of your target audiences - making it one of the most valuable and critical communications tools in your campaign.

News media offer the best opportunity to reach the most people at a given moment. Ongoing coverage can help sustain and reinforce your message, build momentum, and mobilize support for local and National Education Goals.

The difference between being an adequate media strategist and an exceptional one rests with your understanding of the media's needs and your ability to take full advantage of the various opportunities each medium offers.

The "media" encompass both print and broadcast news organizations. Print media include daily and weekly newspapers, news wires, and magazines. Broadcast media include television and radio. Each of these news outlets can be used in a number of different ways to reach various groups of people.

Media outlets, whether print or broadcast, generally have four goals:
* To inform.
* To advise.
* To entertain.
* To make a profit.

Remember that members of the media are under pressure to produce. News radio and TV reporters compete to get the most interesting stories and the best sources or quotes. What makes news is what interests people - how big local and national events affect the community; innovative ways of doing something; what makes life better, richer, or more colorful. These are items people want and need to know about. The media are interested in activities of people who have power, influence events, or shape public opinion, since they cover the ideas and events that affect people in their communities and audiences. Reporters are usually more interested in tangible issues - what affects the wallet and stirs emotion - than in abstract concepts and ideas. Syndicated columnists, editors, and feature writers are often more interested in opinions and trends.

Working with News Media

As an organizer of a local goals- and standards-based reform campaign, you are a reliable source for the media. As with any working relationship, it is good to establish a rapport with people in the news media. Like you, they are professionals, and it is very important to understand how they do business. This will

help you feel at ease in dealing with reporters or editors and will allow you to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Access to media is access to the public. The story they print or broadcast is shaped by the quality, reliability and timeliness of information you provide.

* Don't be afraid to approach the media with an issue or a story idea.

* Try to keep relationships with the media friendly and honest.

* Make it easy for the media to learn about the events or priority issues of your organization by maintaining open lines of communication. The easier you make it for reporters and editors to do their jobs, the more likely you are to receive favorable coverage.

* Take advantage of breaking news in the areas of education or health care by offering comment as an expert resource and spokesperson. Let the media and the community know that you are able to discuss the local impact of a national story. If an issue or story "breaks" on the national level, look to identify an item that has local impact. Offer interviews, up-to-date information, and anything that can give a reporter a fresh angle.

* A single liaison from your organization should be identified to prevent redundant or conflicting information from reaching the media. The media liaison will be responsible for making regular contacts with reporters and editors and responding to media inquiries. An official spokesperson - usually the team leader or chair of your organizing effort - should be the person most often quoted in news stories.

Always keep in mind that as a professional and representative of the local education goals campaign, you are an expert whom the media can use as a reliable source.
(See the "Tips and Materials" section for additional ideas on working with the media.)

What is News?

Sometimes what you think is "news" is not seen that way by the media. Use this list to help develop stories that may generate favorable coverage:

* Announce positions on important and timely issues.
* Influence decisions of the school board or local interest group.
* React to decisions by the board of education.
* Meet to determine a major policy stand.
* Adapt national reports and surveys locally.
* Conduct a poll or survey.
* Analyze an issue or statistics.
* Create special projects for the school or community.
* Attend or conduct workshops and conferences.
* Engage in a political action.
* Stage a debate.
* Inspect a project.
* Pass a resolution.

* Form and announce the names of a committee.
* Announce an appointment.
* Organize a tour.
* Issue a local goals report.
* Honor new officers.
* Tie into a well-known "week" or "day."
* Present an award.
* Give a scholarship.
* Hold a contest.
* Make a trip or site visit.
* Arrange for a testimonial, a guest speaker at meeting or party.

Media Listings and Directories

It is vital to keep good media lists for making telephone contact or sending print materials. Include background information and carefully selected names, addresses, and telephone and FAX numbers for every news organization, reporter, and editor who wants and is most likely to use the materials you send.

The media listing should be as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Include information about deadlines, circulation size, distribution/viewing area, ownership, political leanings and any special topics of interest or format of copy. Also make note of any copy deadlines and times of news broadcast. Track the information in a computerized database or use the inventory forms in the "Tips and Materials" section of this guide.

When putting together a media listing, use reference books available in the public library. These include the Editor and Publisher Yearbook, Working Press of the Nation, and N.W. Ayer Directory. State press associations and many local phone companies also produce media directories. If you have no luck finding information from these sources, then call the station or publication on the phone directly.

A good media listing should include daily and weekly newspapers, shoppers guides, local and special interest publications, city or regional magazines, labor publications, televisions and radio stations (including cable stations), and wire services.

The following section details each of the six primary types of media and explains how you can use each one.

Daily Newspapers

The 1600-plus daily newspapers - "dailies" - in the United States provide an estimated 113 million individuals with their primary source of news every day. Dailies appear in morning and/or evening editions, usually seven days a week.

Daily newspapers cover national, state, and local education initiatives; elementary and secondary school education; and other related topics from many different angles - from writing a profile on a state education leader to covering a local school board meeting.

The better you understand the various ways dailies can cover a story, the more successful you will be as a spokesperson and the more likely you will be to generate solid media and community attention your for campaign and issues. To take full advantage of the print medium, it is important to identify the right person to contact on any given story and know when and how to approach him or her.

Newspaper Deadlines

	Morning Papers	Evening Papers	Sunday Papers
General News	4:00 p.m. the day before publication	5:30 p.m. the day before publication	12:00 p.m. the day before publication
Late-Breaking News	8:00 p.m. the day before publication	9:00 a.m. the day of publication	
Major Late-Breaking News	11:00 p.m. the day before publication	11:00 a.m. the day of publication	
Features			5:00 p.m. the Wednesday before publication (pre-printed)

Who to Contact: The editorial board determines and writes the paper's official position on various issues. Each weekday these commentaries are found on the editorial page. In major papers, a special section of the Sunday paper is often devoted entirely to editorial commentary.

Op-ed/opinion page editors determine which opinion editorials will be published in the paper. Op-eds usually run on the page opposite from the editorials. They are approximately 400-800 words long. Some smaller dailies have one person who serves as both op-ed and editorial page editor.

Weekly Newspapers

Weekly newspapers (or "weeklies") are usually either suburban papers found in close proximity to large cities or rural papers that provide isolated areas with a link to the nearest town or county seat. They may be offered for sale at news stands, by subscription, or distributed free of charge.
Weeklies primarily focus on events and issues that are directly tied to the communities they serve. Most weeklies also offer a calendar of area events. Contact the calendar editor about upcoming community meetings or other events.

Many weeklies are understaffed and have a limited ability to leave the newsroom to cover events, so often the reporters will write stories from news releases or interviews.

Who to Contact: Although the larger weeklies may have a reporter assigned to cover education issues, most assignments are made by the paper's editor or publisher.

Weekly Newspaper Deadlines: Deadlines vary depending on the size of the paper. Most are two to three days (or more) before publication.

Wire Services

Wire services, such as the Associated Press (AP) or Reuters, are national or international news organizations that provide print and broadcast media around the country with up-to-the-minute news. The information is transmitted directly into the newsroom through telephone lines, microwave signals, or other electronic means of delivery.

Wire stories, especially those concerning out-of-town news, are frequently picked up and run verbatim by print and broadcast outlets. Mid-size and smaller news organizations rely heavily on the wires for coverage outside of their areas. Every large news organization subscribes to at least one wire service to keep abreast of news and to back up its own operations. For that reason, it is critical to be included in wire story coverage. In addition to breaking news, wires also run general news articles, special features on human interest stories, and columns by well-known reporters.

* Wire service bureaus are typically located in larger cities, but they frequently use "stringers" (local reporters) to cover news in other areas.

* Be sure all publicity materials go to the nearest wire service bureaus and/or their local "stringer."

* Associated Press has radio bureaus that transmit stories to stations regionally and nationally. Many states have radio networks, too. Consult a local media directory to determine the names of local news services and the issues they cover.

Wire Service Deadlines: Larger bureaus are staffed 24 hours a day and have continual deadlines. Week-days during regular business hours, however, are best for reaching reporters who cover specific beats.

Magazines

Magazines generally offer more comprehensive, in-depth coverage of a subject than newspapers. Consequently, they also demand longer lead-times. Getting covered in magazines usually requires advance planning and a proactive media strategy.

Many magazines have editorial calendars, which provide information about special issues or features planned for the year. To find out what a magazine has planned, request an editorial calendar from the magazine's advertising department at the beginning of each year.

Become familiar with the regular features that appear in every issue and think about where and how a story about your community project to organize and build support for education goals and standards might fit into their format. The editors of these sections are always looking for information that will be newsworthy when the magazine is published.

> **Who to Contact:** At smaller magazines, the editor-in-chief makes most of the assignment decisions. Larger magazines usually have different reporters assigned to cover specific beats (e.g., politics, national news, education, business). Be sure to include in your list of magazines those local and regional publications most often read by tourists and residents.
>
> **Magazine Deadlines:** News magazines (Time, Newsweek, etc.) usually have deadlines a week in advance for weeklies and a month in advance for monthlies. Other magazines (consumer, fashion, trade, etc.) have longer deadlines, approximately three to six weeks in advance for weeklies and two to three months in advance for monthlies.

Television

Think "pictures" when you think of television news. Television is different from all other media in that it demands visual presentation of your message. To succeed in generating TV coverage for stories related to education goals and standards, you must be able to differentiate between print and TV stories. For example, the image of parents and teachers staging a demonstration before a school board meeting is more likely to attract a TV crew than "talking heads" at a news conference.

Beyond simply identifying which of your events will be appropriate for TV coverage, try to devise creative ways to enrich the visual aspects of the story you are trying to tell. Stage visually appealing events and highlight opportunities for television reporters to show people in action - teachers and students engaged in standards-based classroom lessons, parents discussing the dimensions of early childhood readiness in a family education class, or business leaders mentoring students.

To maximize your use of television, remember that this medium provides a dual route for conveying your message - through the spoken word and through images. Consider the backdrop at a news conference. Encourage participants at your events to wear campaign tee shirts and buttons or carry banners or signs to increase visibility and recognition.

Although air time on TV newscasts is limited, local stations usually have at least three scheduled news broadcasts a day where you can seek to generate coverage - one at noon, another in the late afternoon or early evening (between 4:00-6:00 p.m.), and a final report around 10:00-11:00 p.m. Generally, noon and late afternoon broadcasts report "lighter" news - special segments and human interest stories - while the early evening broadcasts serve as the station's primary newscasts. The late news is usually a final update of the day's events.

> **Who to Contact**: Typically, deal with the station's assignment editor or news desk. Larger stations usually have three assignment editors - one for the noon newscasts, one for both evening newscasts, and a weekend assignment editor.

While few stations have a specialized education reporter, there are generally several correspondents who cover human interest and feature news stories.

Television Deadlines : It is best to give TV stations several days to put together an education story. Do not call during or immediately before a broadcast unless you have major breaking news. TV reporters are busiest in the late afternoon before the evening newscasts. Because the news is constantly changing and television newscasts cover a limited number of stories in their half-hour or hour time block, you will find that TV assignment editors are extremely selective. Breaking news often forces TV stations to change their schedule of news segments at the last minute.

A Special Note about Cable Television

Local cable television stations are an often overlooked but extremely effective means of reaching large audiences. Include cable TV in your media efforts whenever possible. And remember, public access stations have a legal obligation to carry a certain amont of locally originated programming. In addition to their regularly scheduled public affairs and discussion programs, many local cable operators are interested in providing their facilities to help you produce news and entertainment programs on topics of community interest.

Because local cable television stations face a highly competitive market, the size of their audiences is typically smaller. Be sure to publicize appearances with fliers, in newsletters, and by word of mouth.

Radio

The influence of radio broadcasters in the daily lives of Americans is often grossly underestimated and occasionally altogether overlooked by even the most experienced media strategists. Radio is often described as the captive electronic medium because it reaches people in all aspects of their everyday life - in their cars, on the way to and from work, in their homes and offices, even while they exercise with a Walkman.

Radio programming offers a variety of formats for communicating to a number of distinct audiences. The most common radio-station formats and their primary/target audiences are:

* All-News: adults, heaviest listening during morning and afternoon rush hours.
* All-Talk: adults (over 40), heaviest listening mid-day and evening.
* Easy Listening: adults (over 30).
* Middle of the Road (MOR): adults (over 30; slightly younger than easy listening).
* Classical: adults (usually higher-income bracket).
* Country-Western: adults (over 30).
* Religious: adults (slightly older than MOR audience).
* Black: black adults (age varies depending on format within category).
* Top 40 Rock: youth (18-35).
* Soul: black youth (teens to mid-30's).
* Urban: young adults (20+), contemporary music.

Each radio station offers regular and special programming combinations.

* News programs provide a vehicle for releasing important and breaking news. Radio newscasts usually air at least twice every hour, allowing your statement to be edited into many sound bites for repeated use throughout the day.
* Regularly scheduled programs (interviews, talk-shows, etc.) provide a public platform to discuss education reform and your community's efforts to achieve education goals in greater length and detail than in normal radio newscasts - which are generally very brief.
* Call-in shows often serve as the modern equivalent of the town meeting. The most common tend to focus on issues of controversy and community concern. Although call-in programs can be unpredictable, they are very popular with the general public in large and small markets, and extremely influential in determining public opinion.
* Public service and public affairs programs are regularly or specially scheduled programs that generally feature a recognizable host.

Additional Information on Public Affairs Programming

Public affairs programming on both radio and television takes several forms: interviews, documentaries, panel discussions, feature reports, and editorial comments. Since policies differ on public affairs programming, contact the public affairs director at each station to introduce yourself and find out what types of programs they offer viewers and listeners.

* Work on program ideas that fit the available formats. Place coalition leaders on these programs to discuss important issues.
* Send a written proposal to the public affairs director outlining your ideas.
* Follow up with a phone call to discuss them.

Editorial Response

Most TV and radio stations are willing to present contrasting viewpoints on controversial matters of public interest.

* Monitor area stations closely to know if your organization's views are getting fair play.
* Contact stations to determine if your issues are being aired.
* If they are not, request that the station consider the issue. The station is not obligated to accept your request, but most stations will air controversial issues. You may expect a counter viewpoint if the station airs your position.

What if the station refuses to grant air time? Ask for an explanation, and if you are not satisfied, write the Federal Communications Commission, Fairness/Political Programming Branch, 2025 M. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Include all information concerning the case.

The "Tips and Materials" section of this guide offers sample editorials and additional guidance on placing these responses.

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

Media Advisory

Purpose - A media or news advisory is used to alert editors and reporters to specific events and/or activities your community may be planning around the National Education Goals and standards-based reform. The media advisory should explain the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of these events and should provide just enough information to entice media to attend.

Note: Media advisories should not be confused with news releases. Advisories are meant to persuade reporters to cover an activity before it happens. Remember, you want the media to attend your events so that you gain exposure and reporters get the whole story. If you give them all the information in the advisory, they can easily write the story from their desks.

How to Use - Send advisories to your state/local media lists, which should include journalists who regularly cover education and other Goals-related topics such as adult literacy, workforce training, child health, and prenatal care.

If you do not have a specific name, address advisories to the "Assignment Editor" at television stations, the "News Director" at radio stations, and the "City Editor" at newspapers. Also, make sure to send an advisory to state and/or local wire services for inclusion in their "daybook" listing of events scheduled that day.

Even if you know that reporters or news organizations are not likely to attend your event - because of time limitations or other reasons - send an advisory to let them know about it anyway. They may want to schedule a one-on-one interview or contact a wire service to cover the event for them.

Timing - Because an advisory sent too far in advance may get lost in the shuffle, mail advisories at least three to five days in advance but no more than a week, unless holidays will interfere with the timing. If you don't have this lead time, hand deliver or FAX the advisory to local media no later than the morning of the day before the event.

Format - A media advisory should:

* Have a brief headline describing the event.
* Have the words "MEDIA ADVISORY" at the top left corner of the page.
* State the date of release, usually the day it is to be mailed.
* Provide contact names and phone numbers.
* Visually highlight the date, time, and place that the news event will occur.
* Give a brief description of the purpose of the event and what will take place, such as a list of key speakers, and be sure to underscore any strong visual aspects so media decision-makers will know if it would be wise to send a photographer or camera crew.
* Be no longer than one page, as a rule of thumb.
* Indicate the end of the page with by using the universal end-symbols recognized by news organizations: "_30_" or "###."

News Release

Purpose - A news release summarizes and presents important stories for the media. The release should frame your message accurately and provide background information and quotes from reputable and knowledgeable spokespeople. A news release helps to make a reporter's job easier, which in turn benefits your efforts.

How to Use - The news release should be the key component of any media kit or information packet. It should be written with the most important information in the first and second paragraphs. Less important points and expansion of overall issues should be included in later paragraphs. As with the media advisory, news releases should be targeted to specific reporters or to the assignment editor or city editor for distribution to the appropriate reporter.

Timing - Most news releases can be distributed at your events. This keeps you in control of the "news" until you are ready to release it. If reporters cannot attend your event, be sure you distribute the release to them in a timely fashion - the same day, if possible.

However, some information will take reporters longer to review and interpret. For example, a report on a poll will require the media to check the numbers and understand your analysis. In these instances, send a release with more lead time and "EMBARGO" the information.

An "EMBARGO" means that a reporter can read the information but cannot make it public until the date noted. The terminology to use is: "Hold For Release - Embargoed until July 4, 1994 at 10:00 A.M. EDT." This ethically binds the media to your restrictions.

Format - The news release should:

* Be typed on 8-1/2" x 11" letterhead.
* Have wide margins to allow for editor's notes.
* Generally be double-spaced and one-sided.
* Be no longer than three or four pages.
* Have a brief headline describing the story.
* Highlight the release date and provide contact names and phone numbers.
* Indicate page continuation by placing the word "more" in parenthesis at the bottom.
* Identify continuing pages with a one-word "slug" or descriptor followed by dashes and the page number.
* Identify the end by placing a "_ 30 _" or "###."

Additional Hints - In writing a news release:

* Use short sentences and paragraphs.
* Make certain that facts are absolutely accurate.
* Check for proper spelling of names and places.
* Avoid jargon and technical terms or explain them if they must be used.
* Don't use initials without indicating what they stand for in the first reference.
* Write factually and objectively - avoid editorializing and using adjectives.
* Insert pertinent quotes from local officials, specific examples, and anecdotes.
* Obtain a "style book" from local bookstores for guidance on punctuation, proper usage, abbreviations, grammar, etc.

News Conference

Purpose - News conferences are used to convene media; to release new information on an issue or a new angle on a previous story; announce a position, future event, or new project; or to launch a campaign.

When to Use - Generally, there are two types of news conferences, proactive and reactive. The proactive news conference would be appropriate, for example, for announcing that your community is launching a Goals 2000 initiative. A reactive news event would respond to breaking news such as the release of the annual National Education Goals Panel Report.

Regardless of the type of news conference, use this vehicle cautiously. If you call on the media to cover a news conference, make sure that you have "news" to deliver or you may risk damaging your reputation as a credible news source.

Timing - Schedule a proactive news conference to coordinate with media deadlines. Generally, the event should be held between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The best days of the week to hold a news conference are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Fridays tend to be poor news days because your story will most likely appear in Saturday's paper, which has a lower circulation. Because of the weekend, Mondays do not allow for last-minute notification of reporters.

Schedule a reactive news conference as close as possible to the breaking news to which you are responding. For example, if an education funding bill is being introduced in the state legislature, convene a news conference that morning, or no later than that afternoon, to react to the bill's implications.

In the reactive news conference, timing is everything. If you wait too long, you will miss being included in the story.

Notification - When you arrange a news conference, send out a media advisory to the appropriate reporters, editors, and columnists. Make follow-up calls at least two days before the event to encourage attendance. This also will help you determine the size of your event.

Site Preparation and Logistics - Site arrangements are a crucial part of a successful news conference.

* Select a location that is convenient for the media or one that provides strong opportunities for visuals (e.g., if you are announcing a new school breakfast program, hold the news conference in a school cafeteria).
* Choose a room that will accommodate the expected attendance. Most likely a small room that accommodates an average turnout of 10-15 people will be sufficient.
* Make sure the room is equipped for broadcast media (e.g., two- and three-pronged electric outlets, etc.).
* Provide a podium that can hold several microphones.
* Display your logo or organizational name on a podium board made of non-glare material.
* Provide chairs for reporters, leaving enough room in the back or in the middle for cameras and tripods.
* If several speakers will be offering remarks, provide a head table with chairs and name cards to identify each.
* Set up easels for any visual materials and make sure to bring double-sided tape to keep the visuals, podium logo, etc., in place.

* Provide a reception table at the room entrance for media to sign in and pick up media information kits. Ask them to provide their name, news organization, and phone number.
* Keep the media sign-in sheet. It is a crucial element for follow-up and future contact. Share the media sign-in sheet with the lead spokespeople before the news conference to alert them to the types of media present.
* Provide a holding room for spokespeople so incoming media will not try to question them before the news conference begins. Talking to media beforehand can sometimes detract from the overall orchestration of the event and the delivery of an effective message.
* Provide modest refreshments only if possible and affordable.

The Event - After all the initial preparations:

* Arrive a half- to one-hour early to make sure your room arrangements are in order.
* Bring along a tape recorder to set on the podium to record the news conference.
* Start the news conference on time and limit the event to 45 minutes or an hour. Allow ample time for questions and answers;
* Depending on the formality of the news conference, have a moderator make introductions and direct questions from the media to the appropriate person.
* If the setting is more informal, begin the news conference by greeting the reporters and briefly stating the purpose for bringing them to the event.
* After the question-and-answer period, leave the room as soon as possible - unless you have prearranged one-on-one interviews with select media.

Followup - Sometimes, even the best planned, most publicized news conferences can fail to attract media or be "upstaged" by unanticipated breaking news. Don't give up or become discouraged. Now is the time to follow-up with those unable to attend in order to secure their interest and coverage.

* Call to inform reporters of what was said at the news conference. Offer to provide them with an interview so that they can cover the story.
* Make sure all the media outlets receive a news release or media kit along with the speakers' statements and any other pertinent information. (Distribute these by FAX or hand deliver if there is a chance that a news organization will cover the story that day.)

Opinion Editorials

Purpose - Opinion editorials or "op-eds" are submitted to daily and weekly newspapers to express the author's position on a particular topic. There are sample op-eds and feature articles in the "Tips and Materials" section of this guide.

When to Use - Write and submit op-eds when you want to express an opinion on events and activities of concern to you as a Goals community organizer. Op-eds are good vehicles for explaining complicated issues - particularly when you are concerned that your message will not be adequately or effectively communicated through regular news coverage.

How to Use - It is a good idea to call the op-ed editor to see if they are interested in the topic and your perspective before investing the time in preparing the piece. During the conversation, explain why your views are important to their readers.

Most daily papers have an op-ed review process that can take anywhere from one to ten days. Many of the larger dailies will require "exclusivity," meaning they will consider your piece only when they are the sole paper receiving it. Be aware of any exclusivity clauses before contacting other newspapers.

When there are no exclusivity issues involved, do a mass mailing to papers and include a one-page "pitch" letter explaining why your opinion should be published, why it is current and relevant, and how your information will be of interest to the paper's readership.

Keep in mind that the "author" of an op-ed is considered at least as important, if not more important, than the message. Make sure that the author you select is the most influential on the topic.

Format - A good opinion editorial should:

* Have a title and indicate authorship.
* Be approximately 400-800 words in length. Check with the papers in advance to determine their word count requirements.
* Be creative, but to the point. Editors like the use of vignettes and analogies, but want to first know what is new and important.
* While you may draw upon the National Education Goals initiative, focus the piece on local angles. Describe the priorities established through the community adoption of the "Goals Process." Cite statistics or other data from local goals reports or surveys. Describe promising and effective education strategies and Goal attainment programs which the community seeks to replicate.
* Stay focused - many op-eds are rejected because the author never delivers a clear message with facts to back it up.
* Include in parentheses at the end the name of the author(s), title, organization, and a one-line description of your mission and membership base.

Editorial Board Meetings

Editorial board meetings create an opportunity to focus media decision-makers on the central issues addressed through the "Goals Process" and to discuss the importance of setting high standards for student learning and performance. The best scenario is to meet before the paper takes a position on a given issue. State your priority concerns in a straightforward manner and seek to shape the board's opinion in your favor. Remember, the staff on the newspaper would rather hear positive input before an editorial appears than handle complaints later.

Arranging the Meeting. Call the editorial department to get the name of the editorial page editor and find out if an editorial writer is assigned to or interested in education issues. (Small papers may have only one editorial writer - often the editor. Large papers may have a staff of five to ten editorial writers.)

Submit a letter to the appropriate member(s) of the editorial staff. State the issue and underscore the timely nature of your request to meet with them. Be sure to stress the local angle, such as describing how the school district and community are adopting or adapting national education standards and goals to local needs. Include background about your most recent activities and the current issues or projects in which you are engaged. Provide necessary contact names and phone numbers. Follow up with a telephone call to restate your request and secure interest in a meeting.

Preparing for the Meeting. The typical editorial board meeting will be with two or three members of the newspaper's staff. Often included are the editorial page editor, an editorial writer, and the general reporter assigned to the issue.

Arrive on time and don't show up with a "war party." Bring from your community organizing team only those people necessary to effectively present your case - the committee chair, the media liaison, official spokesperson, or an individual from the community who is particularly well-prepared to discuss technical and complex issues.

Prepare persuasive arguments in advance. Know all sides of the issues, pros and cons, and the latest developments. Research carefully how this newspaper has covered the issue in the past. Know who wrote the stories. Often you may find you like or dislike the way one particular reporter or editor handles an issue. In this case, be prepared to note any discrepancies in the paper's coverage.

Be courteous and professional. Unless you have an already long-established feud with the paper, don't treat this first meeting as a heated debate. Even then, it is unwise to get overly emotional. This is the time to politely build the arguments that you believe the newspaper has not adequately addressed.

Letters to the Editor

Purpose - Letters to the editor should be relied upon to respond negatively or positively to an article or editorial that a newspaper, journal, or magazine has printed on an issue - or to communicate your opinion without going through the editorial approval process required for publishing op-eds.

When to Use - Write letters to respond to editorials or to news coverage that is centrally linked to questions about the National Education Goals or community-based education reform initiatives. Keep your eyes open for opportunities that may, at first blush, seem to be only loosely connected. Health, nutrition, technological innovation, business, and labor affairs may all have keen relevance to achieving the community's goals for education and lifelong learning.

Don't expect your letters to be printed every time. Most papers have policies on how frequently they will publish the same writer's views.

Format - A letter to the editor should convey the most important message in the first paragraph. If you are responding to an article or editorial printed in that paper, reference the title, date, and author of the original piece in your opening sentence. The letter should be between 100 and 400 words. Pieces that are short and sweet are more apt to be printed. Remember to include your name, address, and daytime and evening telephone numbers so the paper can verify who wrote the letter.

Timing - Many newspapers will print several responses to one article on the same day. It is not unusual to see letters to the editor regarding material printed two months ago. This does not mean that you should wait to respond. Submit a letter as soon as possible _ usually within a few days to a week of a story's appearance. Check several of the responses in the "Letters to the Editor" section in your local papers to get an idea of the newspaper's time-frame for printing letters.

Radio Actualities

What is an actuality? Simply put, it is a piece of sound _ a recorded news release - taken from an actual event, such as a news conference, speech, debate, or rally. The message is fed via telephone from a audio tape to the radio station. Often radio stations are understaffed and not able to send a reporter to cover a news conference. Consequently, they will be pleased to hear actualities.

An alternative to an actuality from a live event is a pre-recorded statement. For example, the chair of your organizing committee reads a short statement into a tape recorder, which you feed to the radio stations.

Radio stations will accept both actualities or recorded statements, but are more likely to take actualities - they have more "oomph" since they originate from a news event.

Promoting Actualities to Radio Stations. Always be prepared when calling the station. Be familiar with the material on the tape and know enough about the nature of the news event to offer background information to the reporter. Also, alert the reporter to the total length of the recorded message before you originate the feed. Generally, the shorter the tape, the better. Ideally, condense the message to no longer than 30 or 40 seconds.

Who Accepts Actualities? If the station's only source of news is wire copy or other written accounts of a story, it is more than likely the station will be eager to take your product because it can lend credibility to what could be an otherwise dull newscast. There are 7,000 radio stations in the U.S., many of whom do not have the financial resources to subscribe to radio networks. Also, when calling a station with an actuality, don't call during busy news times (7:00 -8:30 a.m., 11:30- 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.).

How Do I Feed Actualities? A few basic pieces of equipment are needed - alligator clips to send the feed through the telephone to the radio stations, a cassette recorder, and a microphone - all of which are available from a local electronics store.

1. Select an excerpt from the tape.
2. Place the plug end of the alligator clips in the monitor outlet of the tape recorder. On some recorders, the monitor is indicated by a drawing of an ear.
3. Remove the cover of the telephone mouthpiece and clamp the red and black alligator clips on either of the two metal tabs.

(Warning: Once the telephone mouthpiece and phone insert are detached, you cannot talk with people on the other end. You can hear them, but they cannot hear you.)

Another method for feeding actualities is to use a telephone answering machine. Record the message that you wish to offer radio stations on the cassette tape for "outgoing" announcements. Call the radio station, and when they acknowledge interest in accepting the feed, simply press the button to play the outgoing message from your machine.

Public Service Announcements

Free air time for public service announcements (also called public service advertisements or PSAs) is available on television and radio to community organizations. These messages must contain noncommercial information that is beneficial to the community. Because stations receive a license to use the public airways, they are required by law to carry public service programming and messages.

Any message that is controversial, political, or self-serving is not considered a public service. For a PSA to be accepted for broadcast, it should stress a call to action _ describe how an education goals or standards initiative is in the community's best interest and tell how citizens can get involved.

Public service announcements are not a replacement for paid advertising. Radio and TV stations will base their decision to use a PSA on whether or not the message is truly of service to the public - not of service to the Goals 2000 or community organizing committee.

Before launching a PSA campaign, contact public service directors at individual stations and arrange to meet with them personally to learn more about their guidelines on PSA acceptance. These people are valuable station contacts and might be interested in joining your community organizing campaign to support the Goals.

Determine what their format requirements are for PSAs, and ask if they are willing to help produce the spots. Radio stations will either use cassettes, reel-to-reels, and/or scripts. It is a good idea to include the written scripts even if not requested. Television stations usually use three-quarter- or one-inch tapes and will rarely take the time to produce their own from your written scripts.

Both radio and television PSAs are produced in varying lengths.

10 seconds (approximately 25 words)
30 seconds (approximately 75 words)
60 seconds (approximately 150 words)

When writing public service announcements, keep the following in mind:

* Write short, upbeat sentences.
* Issue a "call for action."
* Tell the audience to contact your organization for more information. Use a telephone number only if your office can handle a volume of incoming calls in the early morning or evening hours.

PSAs should be mailed to a target list of stations along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the PSAs, their length, and any other information to encourage usage.

To monitor PSA usage, include a "reply card" which stations can send back to indicate if, when, and how often the PSAs were used. The reply card can be simply laid out on a personal computer, or even handwritten on index cards. Design it to resemble a magazine business reply card and pre-stamp it if your budget permits.

Have a volunteer make a round of calls a few weeks after the PSAs are distributed to make sure they arrived. Ask when the station plans to air the messages. Let them know that in your publicity efforts to announce the public service advertising campaign, you would like to provide people with information on when to tune in to the station to see or hear the spots - a trick that often secures better placement for your messages.

Keep The Promise

Beginning in the fall of 1994, stations across the country will be asked to participate in the "Keep the Promise" PSA campaign. The campaign is sponsored by the Ad Council and the Education Excellence

Partnership - a coalition including the Business Roundtable, American Federation of Teachers, National Governors' Association, National Alliance of Business, and the "Goals 2000 Educate America Project" of the U.S. Department of Education, a grass-roots network serving thousands of communities in their efforts to achieve the Goals.

The top-quality spots featured in this campaign underscore the need for the U.S. to set higher expectations and standards for student learning if we are to "keep the promises" embodied in the National Education Goals.

A "storyboard" layout of the PSA is included in the "Handouts" section of this guide, and the audio message is featured on the cassette tape. Share this information with your membership and the public service directors of local stations. For more details or to order materials, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Ready-to-Use Radio PSAs

The "Tips and Materials" portion of this guide offers several PSA scripts which you may choose to customize for local usage. The spots are also recorded on the enclosed audio cassette, with time left at the end of each message to include local contact information.
On the cassette you will also hear the audio version of the "Keep the Promise" PSA.

TIPS & MATERIALS

Tips on Pitching Stories to the Media

* Use regional angles to localize national stories and advance efforts to achieve the National Education Goals in your community. For example, when the National Education Goals Panel releases its annual report charting progress toward the Goals, call local education reporters to offer them background on your campaign or compare data on the progress being made in your community. Focus on a local program that is making a difference in your community.

* Be creative, but to the point. Reporters are often in a rush and won't have time to listen to your story over the phone. It is important to list priorities of what you want to say before picking up the phone.

* Use statistics and other data that reporters can readily understand and use. Data can be powerful ammunition to back up your main points. Avoid using more than two numbers in a sentence and try to express data in percentages - 52 percent, two out of three, more than half, etc.

* Be prepared and stay focused. Draft a script before calling reporters, jot down a few critical notes, and practice before making the calls.

* Know when reporters have covered education issues in the past. Mentioning a recent story the reporter has covered is often an easy way to lead into a pitch. For example, "I noticed you wrote a story recently concerning our students' declining test scores in math and science. I thought you might be interested in learning what our Goals 2000 committee is doing to help boost student achievement in these areas."

* Suggest additional resources. Tell reporters which schools they might visit or provide names of teachers or principals who have agreed to talk to reporters about your efforts.

* Avoid calling reporters during their deadlines, such as before top-of-the hour news broadcasts. Find out the deadlines for your local newspapers and television stations in advance.

* Remember - pitching a story to television media is different from pitching to print media. To interest a television reporter, the story must be visual. For example, if you are releasing a local Goals Report, suggest a variety of locations where changes can be seen. These could be classrooms, community centers, doctor offices, work sites and even homes.

Tips for Working with the Media

Whenever possible, you should:

* Contact the media about activities or community projects that tie into issues currently in the news. For example, if a national report on child abuse is attracting public attention, let reporters know about a local parent support group that is guiding and helping abusive parents.
* Set up media interviews, discussions, articles, and events to highlight activities coordinated by the community organizing project. If you're conducting a town meeting, launching a new program, or releasing a goals report, alert reporters in advance and make sure that they have all the necessary information.
* Answer all reporter questions about your activity. While some reporters will keep interviews short, more in-depth stories often require lengthy interviews.
* Work to encourage substantial favorable coverage about the teachers, schools, and volunteers who work with you. While reporters often cover the negative angles and downfalls of our schools, they are usually eager to learn about promising and effective strategies and programs.

To prepare for interviews, you should:

* Anticipate questions that may be asked, and draft responses.
* Review relevant facts, statistics, and specific examples needed to support your message.
* Never tell a reporter something you don't want to appear in print.
* Go "off the record" when you want the reporter to have the information without the ability to quote you by name.
* Make your points clearly and concisely. This is particularly important during live television interviews. Try to keep your answers to three or four sentences so the reporter does not interrupt.

Do not continue talking if you feel you have adequately answered a question.

Do not get angry with the reporter.

Do not be afraid to say you don't know the answer, then offer to find the information.

Tips on Preparing an Editorial Response

* Monitor local news programs and newspapers regularly so you know the issues and are aware of a negative editorial.

* If you hear an opinion you wish to respond to, first get a copy of the negative opinion to learn the exact wording.

* Contact the station's news or editorial director to discuss your interest in responding. Ask about such details as restrictions on time or length, subject matter, and how quickly it must be submitted.

* Research, draft, and reword the response.

* For electronic media, find out if the stations will present the response or if you are supposed to supply your own spokesperson.

* Submit radio and TV responses to stations, with a cover letter introducing your organization and its viewpoint. Include background materials on the community campaign and phone number at which the chair or spokesperson can be reached at all times.

* Follow up with a phone call to be sure that the materials are being reviewed.

* Be courteous and professional at all times.

Television Spokesperson Tips

Preparation

In advance, review or think of questions you might be asked. Organize answers to anticipated questions. Define your viewpoint, and be sure of the facts.

Appearance

Clothing: Wear clothes in which you feel comfortable, but avoid patterns or designs that might prove visually distracting. Wear the color that looks best on you. Also, most people check their appearance standing in front of a mirror, but many interviews are conducted seated. How does that outfit look when you are in a chair?

> Men - A black suit may look nice in the office or at funerals, but the viewer at home will see the image of a wealthy corporate executive. There is nothing wrong with gray, tan, blue, or any lighter color. A solid-color sport jacket is fine. A blue shirt is no longer mandatory, but if it complements the outfit, fine.
>
> Women - Tailored suits in solid colors or simple patterns are best. Brighter colors are fine for suits and shirts. Avoid black or white. Avoid too much pattern or too much fabric. Ties or ruffles are fine, but keep them small and simple. No flashy jewelry.

Makeup: Only the big stations or networks employ makeup artists - so practice before, under the supervision of someone who knows what he or she is doing. Moderation is the key. Even men find some makeup helpful. A light tough of medium "pancake" or powder can cover up a shiny nose or forehead, cover a heavy beard, and eliminate shadows under the eyes.

Glasses: No problem, unless they are large or contain thick lenses that reflect the light. If you are comfortable without the glasses, take them off - but not if you have the look of someone who wears glasses and has just taken them off.

Self: Project enthusiasm and energy, since apathy produces an apathetic audience and a dull broadcast. Television is a pictorial medium. It makes its greatest impact through visual impressions. Success can be as much a matter of impression as substance.

Posture: Sit erect. Lean slightly toward the host. Crossed legs or ankles give a neater, more relaxed appearance. Keep your hands out of the way. Avoid unnecessary gestures or movements.

On Camera Techniques

Where to Look: Forget the camera. Look at the interviewer most of the time. Many people fail to make their point because they are looking around at the lights or camera or staring off into the distance. If you must avert your gaze for some reason, try to look down slightly, thoughtfully. Remember, if more than one person is being interviewed, the camera may be on you even though someone else is talking.

Credibility: It comes through in the tone of your voice, your posture, and your facial expression. Other factors include the accuracy of your information, commitment, enthusiasm, and sincerity. Credibility is important, since viewers tend to remember general impressions more than specific points.

Questions: Defuse highly charged questions by relaxing, restating the question, and eliminating disparaging words and references. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Remember, you are on TV not only to answer questions, but also to register your viewpoint in a positive, forthright way.

Answers: Keep answers short. That is very essential with mike-in-the-face, mini-cam interviews that are very fast-paced and subject to heavy editing later. In those interviews, try to speak in what the trade calls sound bites - short, pithy, substantive phrases, for 20 to 30 seconds at the most. On a talk show, get involved. You are there to have a conversation on a subject of mutual interest. Simply answering questions may not convey what you have to say. In all interviews, remember you are trying to reach people who are largely without any technical background. Therefore, avoid professional jargon or technical explanations.

Stopping: When you have said what needs to be said, stop. If the interviewer waits for you to go on, you may wish to give an example illustrating an earlier point you tried to make. Don't restate what has already been said, or you may say something you'll regret.

Turning: If asked a negative question, respond briefly, and quickly follow with something positive. If the interviewer asked if the answer is "A" or "B" when neither is correct, it is fine to say, "Neither one of those, but I can tell you what the answer is."

Interruptions: Television is a medium of interruptions. There are two kinds:

* Being interrupted for not answering the question asked.
* Being interrupted because the time is up. If you have made your points up front in a concise manner, this won't happen.

Sample News Release

For Immediate Release Contact: [Community Organizer]
[Date] [Phone Number]

BIPARTISAN COALITION FOR EDUCATION GOALS ADOPTS GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Members of a bipartisan local coalition, [name], today released a statement of principles supported by [cite number who signed petition of support] citizens to guide adoption of high academic standards for what all students in [community] should know and be able to do. "Citizens in [community] must agree on the results we expect students to achieve in core academic subjects if we are to improve our system of teaching and learning and prepare young people for the challenges of life after school," said [community leader]. "This statement of principles serves as a reference point as we begin to review the various voluntary national standards for student performance being developed by educators, policymakers, and subject matter specialists across the U.S."

The document outlines five general principles and announces the coalition's intent to support education standards that are:

> Focused on Academics - "Content standards should address core academic areas such as those outlined in the National Education Goals - English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography."
>
> World Class - "The coalition will only support adoption of content standards which, though uniquely American, are at least as challenging and rigorous as the academic expectations for students in other countries of the world. Standards must not be compromised or watered down for any reason."
>
> Developed from the "Bottom-Up" - "Content standards for student learning must be developed through a consensus building process that involves educators, parents, and community leaders. The coalition would oppose any standards that were not developed through a broad-based, participatory process."
>
> Useful and Adaptable - Standards must "allow local educators the flexibility to design their own curriculum plans within broad outlines. The number of standards should be limited, so that they are feasible for teachers, parents and students to use, and represent the most important knowledge, skills and understandings we expect students to learn."

The coalition's statement of principles unequivocally states that standards adopted for the school district must reflect a broad outline of the kind of knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

"These guidelines help assure that the standards created are truly workable for every child in every school in [community]," said [coalition leader]. "The guidelines are designed so that noneducators without specific expertise in fields such as math, science, history, or language arts can understand and judge the merits of standards being set by experts in these academic fields."

-- more --

According to [community leader], "Approval of these guidelines brings us one step closer to making the National Education Goals a reality in [community]. Although the need for standards-driven reform is national, it must be implemented - indeed, invented - on the local level," [community leader] added. "Together, the citizens of [community] will select the best route for providing necessary assistance to schools. We will chart our own map to reach the standards. But we must make sure that the map allows any student who works hard to meet the standards, and any student who meets the standards to be prepared for his or her future."

The [name of local coalition] was created in [date] to monitor and speed progress toward the National Education Goals forged at the 1989 Charlottesville Education Summit with the U.S. President and all 50 governors. The Goals were codified upon enactment of the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" in April 1994. [See attached information sheet on the National Education Goals.] Under the legislation, states and localities can apply for "seed grants" to fund system wide education improvement plans.

Members of the [community coalition] include:

For more information on the coalition, or to obtain copies of the statement of principles on academic standards, contact [provide name, address, telephone and FAX number].

Sample Radio Script on the National Education Goals

Five years after the President and the governors of all 50 states met to set National Education Goals, our children's education is still at risk.

The Goals state that by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn. At least nine out of ten students entering high school will graduate on time, and leave school having mastered core academic subjects such as history, geography, and English. All students should excel in math and science. And all adults should be literate and lifelong learners. Our schools should be safe, drug-free environments conducive to learning. Teachers should have access to professional development opportunities. And all communities should seek to forge partnerships to increase parental involvement in the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

But simply setting goals is not enough. We have ignored the alarms that have been sounding - high dropout rates, low test scores and concern from businesses about the quality of entry-level workers.

Today, too many of our schools have minimum proficiency standards. We are teaching to the lowest common denominator. We need to set high expectations for all students, or we will get poor performance from most. The National Education Goals provide clear targets for achievement that we can use to measure the quality of our learning support systems and determine what needs to be improved.

Like Omaha, Nebraska, we can organize a Goals committee to survey our citizens on the changes that they think are most needed in the schools.
Like Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, we can create a Goals coalition with area businesses to unite our schools, provide mentoring and tutoring to students, and offer assistance to teachers.

Like Leeds, Maine, we can establish benchmarks that demonstrate knowledge and skills in challenging subject matter.

And like many other communities nationwide, we should see how we stack up against the National Education Goals and report what our community needs to do to accomplish them. Just as members of communities band together to help neighbors in a crisis, we must band together to help solve the problems facing our schools.

This nation sets world-class standards for food, air quality, and toys. We can and must do the same for the education of our children. Contact [name & number] to find out what you can do.

Sample Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

SAMPLE 1

(Approximately :30)

Americans demand that the food we eat, the cars we drive, even the toys our children play with meet mandatory standards of quality and safety. Yet, most parents - and the public - are shocked to find that we don't even have voluntary standards in education!

The National Education Goals challenge us to set higher expectations and standards to provide all children with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life after school.

But it's up to the citizens of this community to choose the best route to reach the Goals.

Get involved. For more information, call [phone number].

SAMPLE 2

(Approximately: 30 seconds)

This is a test. Do you know what your children are learning? If you think we should expect as much of our students and set standards at least as high as those in other states and countries, then you need to get involved in the local coalition to support the National Education Goals.

The Goals state that by the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn and graduate from safe, drug-free schools _ having mastered core academic subjects. All adults will be literate, lifelong learners. And parents and teachers will get the support they need. Sound too good to be true?

Find out what you can do to achieve the Goals. Call [name of coalition and contact number].

SAMPLE 3

(Approximately: 15 seconds)

This is a test. Do you know what your children are learning? If you think our children should be held to high standards and be able to perform as well as the best students in other states or countries, you need to know about the National Education Goals.

We all have a stake in our schools. Find out what you can do to achieve the Goals. Call [name of coalition and phone number].

Sample Feature Article: 21st Century Math
By Robert M. Nielsen

I often wonder what my Grandfather Siert would think about letting school kids use calculators to do their arithmetic. An absolute wizard at mental math, he could do problems in his head that made mine swim. A lifetime of carpentry had turned him into a preeminently practical man. After helping me with some troublesome math homework, he was invariably frustrated with being told that my teacher wouldn't let me do the problem his way. For Grandfather, there was no "one best way" to do a thing. He always strived for the way that worked best for him.

Recently I visited my grandson's second-grade mathematics class. I've been puzzling over some of the goings-on in that room ever since. Does anyone know when they got rid of the rows of desks? Small work tables were scattered about, but there was a desk only for the teacher, and it didn't look like she used it much. You never saw such scampering and milling around. I asked the teacher when class was going to begin and she said, "About twenty minutes ago." There were calculators on every table, a computer on one, a television set in the corner, and colored blocks, games, dice, and gadgets of every variety. Everyone was very busy. Children talked to each other and jumped around from one place to another. A group of three with a clipboard, tape measure, and meterstick were running this way and that measuring everything in sight _ even each other. Asking what the lesson was for today, I got an even bigger surprise. The teacher, Mrs. Johnson, smiled politely and said, "There isn't exactly a lesson. These children are working on about nine different activities, each one of them aimed at a particular concept and skill. That group over in the corner is learning to add fractions, the ones over there are doing long division." Pointing around the room, she added, "Multiplication at those middle tables, statistics and probability next to them, and graphing equations over in that far corner. Yes, there's a lot going on in here. Keeps me busy. Why don't you join some of them and see how they're doing?"

When was the last time you saw a whole roomful of kids happy and excited about math? In my second grade class, Miss Leep handed out extra worksheets of multiplication problems as punishment for talking without raising your hand.

Recalling that ratios were the real test of whether or not a kid could do math, I sat down at the Fraction Table next to a little bug named Chrissy. "What are these things?" I asked. "Fraction Cakes," she answered. "What are you doing with them?" I probed. "Adding fractions," she said. "You're too little to add fractions," I teased. "Am not. I'll show you," she shot back. In front of her was a printed sheet with six fraction problems on it. The next in line was 1/2 + 1/3 = ___. I remembered having trouble with that one in the sixth grade.

Chrissy patiently scrabbled around in a box until she found two pie-shaped pieces, one marked 1/2, the other 1/3. Piecing them together on the table, she studied them carefully, then placed the 1/3 on top of the 1/2, and deliberated the new arrangement. Suddenly she smiled, reached in the box, and pulled out two 1/6's and placed them on top of the 1/3. Nodding agreement with herself, she returned the 1/3 to the box. Quickly exchanging the 1/2 for three more 1/6's, she now pieced all the 1/6's together. Glancing triumphantly at me, she picked up her pencil and began to count: "One, two, three, four, five. One-half and 1/3 is 5/6." She grinned and penciled her answer on the sheet. "Do you want me to show you how to do it with the calculator?" she asked. "Sure," I said. "I'd like to see that." So she proceeded. I was in awe, still am.

My first reaction was skepticism and an itch to discount Chrissy's success - to ask her teacher, "Yes, she can do it, but does she really understand what she's doing?" Fortunately I did not ask, for clearly Chrissy did understand. Moreover, she possessed a far deeper understanding of what the sum of those two fractions meant than I ever did, even when I was several years older than Chrissy. "Welcome to the wonderful world of manipulatives," Mrs. Johnson said when I expressed my amazement to her. "We can teach concepts as well as skills with these marvelous little inventions."

I spent the next hour drifting from one table to another, asking questions, and having the children show me what they were doing. In very short order, I had forgotten about this being a school and had begun to believe I was in a wizard factory. "Where did this new way of doing mathematics come from?" I asked. "Is this happening in all schools? With all children? What about their test scores?"

The answers were simple and straightforward - no magic at work here at all. The curriculum is one example of a new learning in mathematics. It is a product of the new standards in curriculum and teaching from NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics), and the promulgation and development of these ideas by the Mathematical Sciences Education Board, a part of the National Research Council in Washington, D.C. This is mathematics for all children, not just the special few. The children are plain ordinary and from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. No, it's not happening in all schools yet, but it should be, and the sooner the better. Our nation's economic survival - as well as my retirement income - depends on it. Children in the second-grade class I visited test out on the California Achievement Test at third-grade levels or better.

My hunch is that Grandfather Siert would see the calculator as a great help and as a way to work on even more complex problems. I remember his chuckling on hearing of my use of trigonometry to figure out rafter lengths for a garage I was building. I was thirty years old at the time. "Let me show you something, Bobby," he said, reaching for his timeworn carpenter's square. He then taught me how to read rafters right off the instrument simply by know the "rise" and "run" of the roof from the blueprint. So from my new perspective, I see his old square as an early computer of sorts - and so would he. Someday I'm going to teach my grandson about carpenter squares, but right now he's too busy learning mathematics for the twenty-first century.

(Robert M. Nielsen is a former professor of mathematics and currently an education consultant based in Washington, DC. Additional discussion materials on standards in mathematics can be obtained by writing the National Education Goals Panel, 1850 M Street, N.W., Suite 270, Washington, DC 20036.)

Sample Op-Ed

In the United States, we have standards for the amount of fat in hamburger meat and the amount of lead in gasoline. We also have standards for the fabric in children's pajamas. To ensure the quality and safety of everything from stepladders to teddy bears, the nation has established conditions that must be satisfied.

But shocking as it may seem, we have set no similar standards for one of the most crucial building blocks of our society - education.
Currently, the caliber of education our that children receive depends too much on chance and circumstance. It is determined by "ifs" - if you live in the right area, if your child gets the right teacher, if there is necessary support at home.

As a nation, we have been operating blindly, without any agreement on what all our students should know and be able to do. Rather than carefully measuring and monitoring what students are learning at every stage, we require them to accumulate a certain number of courses in their twelve-year public school careers. The problem is, twelve years of attending courses is not always the same as twelve years of learning and mastering specific skills.

Our country can do better than this. We know from our own lives that our victories seldom exceed our efforts. When we set our sites low, we usually get just what we expect. Fortunately, the President, and the nation's governors, and Congress have established the National Education Goals and a mechanism to craft the standards that will measure progress toward the Goals. The Goals are the target we should aim for; the standards will be the nation's first true yardstick to measure student learning.

These Goals and standards are a public promise to our children that they will get the attention they need to become the most skilled and knowledgeable adults possible. In a break from today's self-fulfilling prophecy of disappointing student performance, the Goals tell us what we as a nation need to accomplish. They provide clear targets. With high standards for student performance in place, we have the tools to help measure our progress. Together, Goals and high standards tell us what we need to do to create a world-class workforce and remain internationally competitive.

Without education goals and standards, the consequences are predictable: The brightest pupils in [city] are not challenged, and lower achieving students are left behind. There is no assurance to students, parents, taxpayers, and employers that students who graduate have learned essential knowledge and skills. We accept low levels of student accomplishment, rather than spurring all students to perform at their peak. It is like a track coach praising athletes for beating the slowest runner's time, instead of urging them to break their own "personal best" record.

The good news is that this is already beginning to change. In communities across the country, citizens are using the National Education Goals to guide them as they collaborate to establish educational priorities. [City] must join in this nationwide effort.
Like Cabot, Vermont, our teachers and citizens might agree to eliminate traditional requirements that students take a certain number of courses in each subject and replace them with proficiency standards that students must meet every two years. Or they might follow Omaha's lead and hold town meetings and a citywide ballot to identify what the public is ready and willing to do to improve public education. We believe it is time for [city] to come up with its own unique approach to meeting the National Education Goals.

Now is the time to begin. If we continue to expect so little from [city's] students today, we are setting them up for failure in the job markets of tomorrow. By the year 2020, the total of human information will double every 73 days. By the time children born today reach middle age, 97 percent of the knowledge in the world will have been discovered since their birth. Advances in technology are redefining the very nature of work. A mediocre education is not enough to prepare our young people to keep up.

A generation ago, President John F. Kennedy challenged citizens of the United States to land a man on the moon. He knew that the first and most important step in any journey is determining where you want to go.

As we follow the path to world-class student performance, education goals and standards can serve as the guiding stars by which we navigate through change. Our children, and our nation, deserve no less.

[Provide name of author, title, organization, and a one-line description of your organization or interest group.]

Sample Letter to the Editor

[Use this letter on its own, or to respond to education-related articles in the newspaper. In the latter case, the introduction might read: The article on student achievement / teacher salaries / dropout rates / school attendance (headline, date) raises some basic questions about why our education system is falling short. One simple concept can help guide us toward a solution: True progress is possible only if you know your destination.]

To the Editor:

As the nation struggles to figure out why the education system is falling short, one simple concept can serve as a guide: We can only make true progress if we know where we want to go!
Until recently, such goals have been missing in education. We have lacked a national agreement on what students should know and be able to do when they emerge from the public education system and what constitutes the "academic success" to which every student should aspire.

The National Education Goals established under the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," and the creation of standards for what students should know and be able to do, are now filling that gap - focusing our attention and resources on what we want and need to accomplish. All across the nation, parents and concerned citizens are using the Goals as a framework to dramatically change the systems that support teaching and learning - from prenatal care to assure that babies get the best possible start to workforce training programs that provide employees with opportunities to acquire needed skills. Achieving the National Education Goals will strengthen the fiber and backbone of our communities.

[Insert any local experience or community activities surrounding Goals, if available. Or, use the following paragraph.] In one city, the local newspaper distributed to 250,000 households a report listing more than 125 strategies the community could follow to help achieve the Goals. These strategies were then condensed into a community action plan after more than 50,000 people identified by ballot the activities they felt would be the most appropriate for their schools. The immediate results: a pilot project to teach students the most critical skills required in over 50 of the most prevalent jobs in the community, and a model program that aims to double the number of children served by early childhood care and education. This is just the beginning.

Goals and standards must be the anchor for our education reform efforts. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and teacher training can all be better focused and more effective if they are aimed toward the same end.

[Other communities / our community] [are/is] starting to see the wisdom of using education goals and standards as a framework for reform. We need to build on that beginning.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Sample Speech: Higher Standards, National Goals

U.S. citizens demand that the food we eat, the cars we drive, even the toys our children play with meet a mandatory standard of quality and safety. Yet most parents - and the public - are shocked to find we don't even have voluntary standards of quality in education.

Right now, the quality of our children's education depends too much on chance and circumstance. Quality education is determined by "ifs" - if you live in the right area, if your child gets the right teacher, if there is necessary support at home.

There is no agreement on what all our students should know and be able to do. Rather than carefully measuring and monitoring what students are learning at every stage, we count the years they spend in school - as if twelve years of attending classes is the same as twelve years of learning and mastering specific skills.

Many of our students in <city> are not challenged, not asked to perform to the limit of their abilities. Our students take four years of English, social studies, and science and graduate without ever being held to a standard of achievement that compares with students from other communities, states, or top-performing countries.

We have sunk to accepting low levels of student accomplishment, rather than challenging all students to perform at their peak. It is a bad as having a track coach praise his athletes for beating the slowest runner's time, instead of urging them to reach their personal best.

In 1990, the fifty state governors, led by then-Governor Bill Clinton, met with President Bush to help raise standards in our education system. They rejected the idea that the national government should control the schools or institute a national curriculum. Instead, they decided that the U.S. would play to its strength - its predominantly locally controlled schools. Their solution was to set a national vision and direction by urging each community to chart it own course to achieve National Education Goals.

Through the National Education Goals, the governors and the President addressed priority needs if citizens of this nation are to be prepared to face the next century. The Goals state that by the year 2000:

* All children in America will start school ready to learn.
* The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
* American students will demonstrate competency in challenging subject matter, learn to use their minds well, and be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment.
* U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics.
* Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary for later life.
* Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
* Teachers will have access to professional enrichment programs so that they will have the knowledge and skills necessary to instruct and prepare all students for the next century.
* Every school will promote partnerships to increase parental involvement in their children's social, emotional, and academic growth.

These Goals are a public promise to our children and our citizens. The Goals tell us what we as a nation need to accomplish. With clearly defined targets, communities can mount strategies and create an accountability system with specific performance benchmarks to mark progress over time.

A generation ago, President Kennedy challenged citizens of the United States to land a man on the moon. He knew that the first step in any journey is determining where you want to go. The National Education Goals are a first step for the nation, and our community - and it is our job to determine the best way to reach them.

Other communities are well into the process. Many have created family learning programs, parent support networks, prenatal care clinics, and programs to help workers upgrade and refine their skills to remain competitive in today's fast-paced job market. To keep students in school, some communities have instituted dropout prevention programs, alternative school environments, and incentive programs that help pay for college tuition. In other locales, they have concentrated on retraining teachers in specialty subjects and set new curriculum standards for what students should know in every subject area. Many schools are inviting scientists and engineers into the classroom and are sending teachers into the world of industry to study the applications of knowledge.

It's time for [city] to act. For our children to acquire a world-class education, we must all participate in the learning process - whether we are parents, educators, business leaders, community members, or elected officials. We must work together to create new methods, pursue new opportunities, and enforce higher standards.

For our first step, we should embrace the "Goals Process." This calls upon [city] to adopt the National Education Goals or similar goals that cover the entire breadth of focus from prenatal care to lifelong learning. We need to set up a system to assess our current strengths and weaknesses in these Goal areas and set targets for where we want and need to be each year between now and the year 2000. Together, we can devise strategies to meet the Goals and identify barriers that stand in the way of progress. And perhaps most important, we must agree to continuously re-evaluate and modify our strategies as needed.

I ask community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, administrators, parents, students, elected officials, law enforcement and health care professionals, and the general public to join in this journey to make changes that will count. The federal government cannot mandate these changes, nor can our state governments or the hardworking people in schools bring about sweeping and systemic change on their own. This must be a community effort if we are to succeed.

Once, the school and the family formed the foundation of a strong American community. It can be again, if we use the National Education Goals as a framework for improvement.