

Promise Neighborhoods Media Toolkit

Resources for Building an Effective Communications Plan

So you’re building a Promise Neighborhood in your community—Amazing! With so much going on, you may forget to step back and document all that is happening. Meaningful stories are unfolding every day among community members and within your programs. This toolkit provides resources to help you publicize meaningful stories about your work.

Who wants to hear your story? **Policymakers** are looking for innovative programs to support communities in need. **Local businesses** want to know how your community work impacts the economy. **Neighboring communities** want to learn what is working so they can improve outcomes in their neighborhood. Building a strong communications plan can:

1. Inspire current partners to continue building their efforts and partnerships.
2. Engage potential funders by showing the potential for publicity.
3. Inform local businesses and other organizations about the impact of Promise Neighborhoods on the local economy – each new story adds to the national Promise Neighborhoods movement.

Engaging with media has profound effects on local communities. It allows you to publicly recognize local community members as they defy odds many have considered insurmountable. Over time, neighboring communities will be inspired to start their own efforts and funders will increase support for proven models, starting a domino effect as the national Promise Neighborhoods movement continues to grow. As we begin collecting data and achieving results, it is crucial to share our stories of success so your local community can get involved in the work.

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Do We Even Have Anything to Share?

You may be just starting out and feel that there are no results to speak about. This is not true! The fact that even just a few community members or organizations are collaborating on the future of your community can inspire and engage others to get involved.

Types of stories to share in blogs, social media, newsletters, etc.

- **Organizational Milestones:** Consider publicizing anniversaries or other milestones within your core organizations. Be proud of the milestones you've reached as you aim for improved outcomes.
- **Funding Milestones:** Simply applying for grants or completing RFPs are integral steps in the process of developing a Promise Neighborhood. Consider issuing a press release or even just a blog about what it took to apply for a planning grant or other funding. Your community will appreciate that you're lifting up their work and will be hungry for more.
- **Community Collaboration:** Consider sharing stories about how different people or organizations are collaborating in your community. For example, are local businesses (banks or retailers) engaging with your efforts? Unlikely partnerships may develop and you should capture the stories that follow.
- **Adult Successes:** Many Promise Neighborhoods focus primarily on child outcomes. It is important to recognize the impact your efforts have on adults in the community as well. All over the country, parents and other adults are seeking out ways to further their education and support their family. Seek out opportunities to meet with these adults and share their stories whenever possible.
- **Child Successes:** When you begin accruing student outcomes, share your results with the public. Until then, watch closely for how your organization is impacting children in other ways. Even just showing that you care can have a profound impact on the children in your community. Share their stories!
- **Building Infrastructure and Foundations:** Share how you help people get to work and school in your community. You can't run a train until you've laid the tracks! When you break ground on new parts of your Promise Neighborhood, that's news!

Links to Stories

- [Student Profile of Success in San Antonio, TX](#)
- [Youth Advisory Board is Developed in Hudson, NY](#)
- [Summer Learning Opportunities in St. Paul, MN](#)
- [Transitioning from 'Planning' to 'Implementing' in Los Angeles, CA](#)
- [Implementation Grant Kicks Off in San Antonio, TX](#)
- [Private Donation in Madison, WI](#)

You don't need to shock the world with every story shared on your blog or with the media. The important thing is to keep the content fresh and interesting so you can build your brand in your community. This toolkit includes resources for engaging with media once you decide on what you will share.

Know Your Message – General Talking Points

The talking points below are intended to prepare you for a variety of situations—speaking to the media, meeting with potential funders, talking to policymakers, or presenting at town hall meetings. Incorporate the language that works for your community.

What is a Promise Neighborhood?

- A Promise Neighborhood is a community of opportunity that allows children to learn, grow, and succeed. The model relies on partnerships between schools, community organizations, local businesses, and other community members in a local neighborhood.
- Inspired by the model of the Harlem Children’s Zone, Promise Neighborhoods wrap children in high-quality, coordinated health, social, community, and educational support from **cradle to college to career**.
- The Promise Neighborhood model is not a new concept; it builds on successful efforts already underway in communities nationwide. Our goal is to lift up what we know works and focus on those efforts.
- Strong schools are at the heart of a Promise Neighborhood, but responsibility extends beyond the school walls. It includes the health clinic, the tenant association, even local grocery stores.
- A Promise Neighborhood is a local, community-driven effort. Promise Neighborhoods are popping up in local communities around the country. When these local efforts come together to learn and collaborate, we have a national movement.
- Promise Neighborhoods allow children to grow up healthy and well-educated so they can reach their full potential. Promise Neighborhoods keep our workforce and communities strong.

Why are Promise Neighborhoods the Answer?

- Every community has islands of excellence—programs or schools that excel for children and the community. Promise Neighborhoods build bridges between these islands.
- Promise Neighborhoods address the interconnected problems that plague distressed neighborhoods—poor health, high crime, underfunded schools, insufficient affordable housing.
- We must dismantle the pipeline to prison, and build a pipeline from the cradle to college to career. The pipeline to prison refers to the national trend of criminalizing, rather than educating, our nation’s children.
- Promise Neighborhoods are data-driven and results-based. They use a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework to understand what works and what doesn’t work, and to efficiently change course if needed.
- Promise Neighborhoods are inspired by the proven method of the Harlem Children’s Zone, which has demonstrated results at every developmental age of a child and currently has over 700 youth in college.

How Can Promise Neighborhoods Be More than a Federal Program?

- The Promise Neighborhoods model is not a new concept; it builds on successful efforts already underway. The federal program provides a much-needed boost to these ongoing efforts, and inspires more communities to become Promise Neighborhoods. In 2012, 242 communities applied for federal funding.

- The Promise Neighborhoods planning process has been a catalyst for change, bringing together community leaders in an unprecedented way, and will allow communities to thrive with or without incremental federal funding.
- Promise Neighborhoods leverage federal, private, and public dollars to ensure the longevity and stability of their programs.
- Because Promise Neighborhoods align resources from a variety of sources, the investment in children and community continues beyond the federal grant.
- Promise Neighborhoods operate with full community support at all levels—from banks and foundations, to schools and social service organizations, to families and kids.
- Hundreds of communities are building Promise Neighborhoods even without the guarantee of federal funding because they know their challenges, and they know Promise Neighborhoods are the solution. Promise Neighborhoods do whatever it takes to succeed, relentless in the pursuit to help their community.

General Messaging Tips

- Storytelling is compelling—talk about something you’ve experienced, and mention a specific community member by name. Develop a powerful story using these simple tips:
 - Share how unlikely leaders or community members overcome unique challenges.
 - Meaningful stories share the storyteller’s values. For example, many Promise Neighborhoods are based on **equity**, as all children deserve an equal chance to succeed regardless of which zip code they were born in.
 - Include striking images whenever possible.
 - Explore multiple media types to share stories (e.g. Website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Listen to your colleagues to hear how they talk about Promise Neighborhoods—encourage them to share more; you’ll find new and exciting ideas.
- Give specific examples of how your Promise Neighborhood will be—and has been—effective, and how many years you and your community partners have been engaged in this type of work.
- Make everybody feel that what they do is key to the project’s overall success. Ask for their input and capture their story.
- When speaking to **funders** and **policymakers**, emphasize the data-driven, results-oriented nature of the work.
- When speaking to **local businesses**, emphasize that the sustainability of a business is linked to the well-being of the people in its community. We do not need to experiment or explore anymore. We already know what works. It is time to invest and act.
- When asking for support, remain optimistic in the assessment of your program and your potential for success.
- Control your message and be consistent with your language, utilizing these talking points.

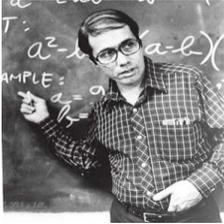
Every Child Deserves a Promise Neighborhood.

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink provides support to Promise Neighborhoods to ensure that all children live in communities of opportunity that enable them to learn, grow, and succeed. The Institute—a nonprofit, independent organization—helps build and sustain Promise Neighborhoods that wrap children in education, health, and social supports from the cradle to college to career.

Contact Shantha Susman at shantha@policylink.org with questions.

Storytelling Strategies

Consider powerful stories of our generation:



What are themes of powerful stories?

- Most powerful stories have **unlikely heroes** with little expected of them. People relate to unlikely heroes because they're just like the rest of us.
- Heroes have **mentors** to guide them.
- Mentors help bestow **core values** on the hero.

What role should Promise Neighborhoods play?

- Promise Neighborhoods can play the role of **mentors** in your community.
- Consider **equity** as a **core value** of your Promise Neighborhood – all children deserve an equal chance to succeed regardless of race or socioeconomic status.
- Consider **volunteers, staff, students, and parents** who are stepping up as unlikely heroes. They are everywhere!
- Whenever possible, include **striking images** when sharing stories on your website, on social media, or with traditional media outlets.
- Check out Jonah Sachs' *Winning the Story Wars*, a new book about effective storytelling.

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) and Storytelling

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink is a firm believer in the benefits of using Results-Based Accountability (RBA). RBA, based on Mark Friedman’s acclaimed framework, is a disciplined way of thinking. It focuses on holding all community partners accountable for results and “moving from talk to action” to drive community change. This section outlines how RBA works, and how it relates to storytelling in your community.

How RBA Works

- RBA starts by focusing on community outcomes, like graduation rates or college attendance rates, and works backwards to identify strategies and actions to achieve these desired outcomes. Working backwards from outcomes allows Promise Neighborhoods to consider the many partners with a role to play in improving the community and what contribution each might make.
- As a Promise Neighborhood, there is little question about the passion for the work. RBA aids that passion with a discipline focused on accomplishing goals.
- RBA requires both recording baseline information and creating action plans to achieve desired outcomes. If action plans do not work, program managers or leaders hold themselves accountable by changing the course of action. RBA does not provide all the solutions, but can help identify which strategies are working.

RBA and the Promise Scorecard

- Communities in the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink Communities of Practice use the Promise Scorecard—a web-based data dashboard and tool, based on RBA principles—to track continuous progress towards specific indicators associated with the community. In addition to narrow, short-term outputs, RBA identifies broader long-term “population” outcomes.
- The Promise Scorecard allows for easy access to data to foster results-based storytelling that show how a community is “turning the curve” on specified indicators and outcomes.

Storytelling with RBA

- Use data to expand on stories as you do your work. Stories help provide meaning behind data. Meaningful stories come in all shapes and sizes but most involve unlikely heroes overcoming odds or achieving greatness. Infuse RBA into your stories by providing data as proof that challenges have been overcome. Recognize your Promise Neighborhood’s impact on recipients of your services and the greater population.
- As you identify which people or organizations are driving outcomes, you will identify the “heroes” in your community. Consider using current events or pop culture to catch the audience’s attention.
- Promise Neighborhoods have a terrific opportunity to share great stories with real outcomes. By using RBA, outcomes will be clearly available on the Promise Scorecard for your storytelling. Lift up what works in your community by sharing these outcomes in different stories.

RBA in Action

By including facets of RBA in your messaging, you will build a culture of accountability within your promise neighborhood. Below is an example from [Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood's \(CLRPN\) website](#). This blog encompasses many of the ideals of RBA and shows how CLRPN's efforts have community members focused on turning the curve:

Community Blog by Jonnyce Arnold – 7/11/2012

IMMEDIATELY
INTRODUCES
PROGRAM AND
AUTHOR'S ROLE
IN THE EFFORT

These are words we should be embracing for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren and everyone. The CLRPN and CALS have created a CLRPN Reads! summer reading outreach program and I am working on it as part of the City of Little Rock's Summer Youth Employment Program. The four main goals of CLRPN Reads! for this summer are:

- Increase the number of library cardholders
- Increase the number of books checked out by new cardholders
- Increase the number of kids who attend programs at neighborhood location and branch libraries
- Increase the number of books kids have as a part of their daily experience and opportunities they have read

IDENTIFIES
PROGRAM
GOALS

DISCUSSES
ACTION PLANS
TO ACHIEVE
GOALS

We have been achieving these goals by going to neighborhood sites (Bishop Warren, The Orchard, and Stephan Community Center) and giving away books, library cards forms, and summer reading bags. CALS has a program specialist, Latoya Morgan; she visits with us when she can and reads a book to 3-7 year olds and does an activity with them. Our focus is to get children involved in reading for the summer by having fun along with reading.

I personally have had a chance to interact with these children, who are all great kids that need someone to be there with them and give them a little guidance. I have spoken with a few on occasions and they made me realize that I can help them first by putting a book in their hands, reading to them and letting them read back to me. One child was so excited to see me back, she ran up to me and asked "Are you giving away books today?" That made me smile, knowing that there are children who want to read. It's definitely time for us to start helping a kid out as much as possible with their education, getting them to the reading level they need to be on so they can look forward and be prepared for college along with the outside world. CLRPN Reads! is a start.

IDENTIFIES BROAD
RESULTS-BASED
OUTCOMES AND
CONNECTS TO
LARGER GOALS
OF PROMISE
NEIGHBORHOOD
EFFORT

Key RBA Takeaways

The blog touches on many key aspects of RBA including long-term outcomes (students getting to higher reading levels) and specific programmatic outputs like program attendance and number of books in kids' hands. To enhance the message, the author could explain how they will track performance over time and hold themselves accountable to the results so eloquently defined in the blog.

RBA in Action

A Lesson From 'The Hunger Games': [An article from PNI Director Michael McAfee in The Huffington Post](#)

USES POP CULTURE AS A HOOK AND TO CONNECT THE PROBLEMS IN POOR NEIGHBORHOODS TO CURRENT EVENTS

The world of the hit movie "The Hunger Games" -- a ruined North America -- seems unreal, but it lays bare a reality we know all too well: We need to find a better way to revitalize poor neighborhoods. In "The Hunger Games," teenagers from impoverished districts are forced to compete with each other as the world watches. Poverty and desperation are on display, but nothing systemic and lasting is done to revitalize poor neighborhoods and build a better future for these teenagers and their families.

DATA INDICATE THE ISSUE IS URGENT

"The Hunger Games" explores a post-apocalyptic world, but at this moment in our own reality too many neighborhoods across the country have an atmosphere of helplessness, and Americans are starving for access to opportunity. Barriers block children from healthy food, quality education, and social services that would help them learn, grow, and succeed. African American and Latino girls and boys born into lower-income families are more likely to remain poor than white children, which is especially problematic when we think about the huge shift in demographics: Today, nearly half of all children are kids of color. By 2042 a majority of Americans will be people of color.

ILLUSTRATES WHY WE HAVE A PROBLEM (BARRIERS)

STRONG CALL TO ACTION

If we don't prepare all of our children today to be the leaders of tomorrow, our entire economy will suffer. We cannot be indifferent to those held back most by the painful inequality in our country; if we are, it will be the downfall of this great nation.

IDENTIFIES WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REMEDY THE PROBLEM

But there's hope. We don't have to watch passively as poverty cripples our economy. Leaders in neighborhoods all across America are beginning to build communities of opportunity using the innovative Promise Neighborhood model. Based on the principles of the Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighborhoods knit together the educational, health, and social supports children need to graduate from college, become leaders in their communities, and support themselves and their families.

We need to turn our neighborhoods into places where children can reach their full potential - not places they'll feel lucky to escape. The Gulfton Promise Neighborhood in Houston helps children develop the skills necessary to succeed in a global economy. Third graders come to school wearing shirts with the names of the colleges they plan to attend. They walk past a community garden to an on-campus credit union to make small deposits to help fund their college educations and invest in their futures. They're thinking big, and the support they get in the Promise Neighborhood helps them excel.

WE SEE THAT THE STATUS QUO ISN'T WORKING - SO CHANGE IS REQUIRED. WALKING AWAY IS NOT AN OPTION.

To keep "The Hunger Games" on the big screen -- and out of our neighborhoods -- we need to invest in Promise Neighborhoods. With focused funding on the neighborhoods hit first and worst by the recession, our entire country will benefit.

Let's build an entire country of Promise Neighborhoods in America today so that America's tomorrow is equitable, inclusive, and prosperous.

Engaging With Media – The Basics

Now that you’ve reviewed the talking points and understand how RBA works, it is time to prepare for your interaction with the media. Most interaction will be written but it is also important to prepare for interviews or other platforms for expressing your views (e.g. radio or TV spots). Below are some tips for engaging with media in person.

Interview Tips

- **Be prepared:** Review your talking points on a regular basis. You never know when you’ll get the chance to share your messages – at an event, a community meeting, or on cold phone calls.
- **Deliver direct responses:** Give concise, to-the-point answers to interviewer questions.
- **Maintain eye contact:** Even if you are being interviewed on camera, be sure to look at the interviewer and maintain direct eye contact.
- **Restate and reinforce your message:** Whether it is a speech, blog, interview or any other platform; it is important to reiterate your most important points.
- **Practice:** Ask a colleague to ask you questions in a ‘mock interview’ at your office. Listen to how your colleagues describe your work – you might hear something you can steal! The more often you give interviews, the more experienced you’ll become.

Do

- Stay on message. Stick to your key points.
- Make your point and move on. Don’t ramble.
- Be prepared with a quote you’d like included in the final story. Listen carefully for opportunities to include it.
- Be honest if you don’t have an answer to a question, but promise to supply it after the interview.
- Rephrase the reporter’s questions to allow yourself to answer in a way that’s consistent with the message you want to deliver and buy yourself a little time.
- Practice “bridging” – if you’re asked who you will be voting for, answer by saying, “what’s really exciting is how the election highlights issues facing children in our community...” and go from there.
- Practice with colleagues before giving interviews with reporters.
- Relax, be yourself, and remember that in most instances you know far more than the reporter about your initiative.

Don’t

- Use sarcasm.
- Say “no comment.”
- Forget to supply information you’ve promised to deliver.
- Respond to third party or hypothetical questions.
- Think you can go “off the record” with a reporter.
- Get drawn into an argument with a reporter.

Media Engagement Checklists

Engaging with local and national media is an effective way to share your message and build your brand. Below are three tiers of checklists to follow as you build your media plans. Note that each plan builds on the prior one with increasing sophistication. In addition to the checklists, the following pages provide tips and techniques for implementing the strategies listed below.

Reactive Media Planning (Low Engagement)

- ✓ Review Promise Neighborhoods talking points.
- ✓ Identify stories from your Promise Neighborhood that bring core messages to life (email to stories@policylink.org).
- ✓ Build a social media strategy, using tips shown in this packet – aim to post or share Facebook or Twitter messages 3-5 times per week (minimum). Sign up for Google search alerts on relevant topics like “Collective Impact,” “Promise Neighborhoods,” or your neighborhood name to stay on top of current events.

Proactive Media Planning (Mid-Engagement)

- ✓ Review Promise Neighborhoods talking points
- ✓ Identify stories from your Promise Neighborhood that bring core messages to life (email to stories@policylink.org).
- ✓ Build a social media strategy, using tips shown in this packet – aim to post or share Facebook or Twitter messages 6-7 times per week (minimum). Sign up for Google search alerts on relevant topics like “Collective Impact,” “Promise Neighborhoods,” or your neighborhood name to stay on top of current events.
- ✓ Add a blog to your website and contribute at least every few weeks (identify service providers or other staff who may wish to contribute to blog).
- ✓ Share blogs on social media sites to build awareness for your work.
- ✓ Develop news releases to share meaningful milestones with local media.

Proactive Media Planning (High-Engagement)

- ✓ Review Promise Neighborhoods talking points.
- ✓ Identify stories from your Promise Neighborhood that bring core messages to life (email to stories@policylink.org).
- ✓ Build a social media strategy, using tips shown in this packet – aim to post or share Facebook or Twitter messages 8-10 times per week. Sign up for Google search alerts on relevant topics like “Collective Impact,” “Promise Neighborhoods,” or your neighborhood name to stay on top of current events.
- ✓ Add a blog to your website and contribute regularly (identify service providers or other staff who may wish to contribute to blog).
- ✓ Share blogs on social media sites to build awareness for your work.
- ✓ Develop news releases to share meaningful milestones with local media.
- ✓ Stay close to local and national news publications. Contribute op-eds and letters to the editor (LTEs) to challenge a current opinion or story, or if you can provide needed context.
- ✓ Develop a video story to share on your website and/or social media sites – focus on the community members in your community to lift up what works.

Social Media Strategy

Tips for building a Social Media Strategy

Social media can be an effective way to engage your community and share stories with the general public. On the other hand, social media can be difficult to maintain and confusing to maneuver. Below are a few tips to help you build an effective relationship with your community on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

1. **Establish and delegate responsibility for maintaining all social media sites:** It is easy to create a Facebook page or Twitter account for your organization but it can be difficult to maintain. Meet with your Promise Neighborhood team to determine whether or not you have the capacity to devote daily attention to your social media site. You don't need to be posting or updating 24/7, but consistency matters for building meaningful relationships. In our analysis, successful social media sites update at a minimum of 2-4 times per week.

Martha O'Bryan Center:
The Martha O'Bryan Center in Nashville, TN buys ads on Facebook and provides regular updates on Facebook and Twitter (@MarthaOBryanCtr). In June of 2012 on Facebook, they posted more than 10x per week and garnered 504 'Likes'!

2. **Build a calendar and strategic plan for maintaining all social media sites:** The Social Media Manager on your team (see tip 1) should begin their foray into social media by developing monthly calendars of events or activities (and/or for the entire year) that your Promise Neighborhood cares about. This calendar will provide a starting point for your organization to begin building social media relationships. See page 13 for a sample monthly plan.
3. **Find like-minded organizations to "like" or follow:** Remember that you are not alone in your desire to build equity within your community. Search your social media sites to find like-minded local and national organizations. Not only can you start building relationships, but you can use their social media updates to disseminate information, events, resources and stories. Don't forget to also link up with other Promise Neighborhoods around the country to ensure you are sharing and learning together.
4. **Develop messaging in a conversational tone:** Be friendly! Be nice! The most effective social media campaigns do not simply dole out information but also ask for feedback and provide

Promise Neighborhoods Institute:
Here at PNI, we aim to strengthen the Promise Neighborhoods movement across the country to lift up what works. We do this by sharing your updates on Facebook and contributing pertinent information you may share with your followers.

forums for further conversation. One way to do this is to ask a thought-provoking question about your community to get people engaged on your site. Also, to share more robust information, let your blog be a central hub for information as many social media sites limit length in posts. On Facebook and Twitter, you can provide concise overviews with a link to blogs for more thorough information.

5. **Give your network a reason to engage:** Promise Neighborhoods have great messages to share. It is essential to catch people's attention in your network – consider recognizing individuals or groups as an incentive to engage others to join your conversation. Incentives don't necessarily have to cost a lot of money – if a volunteer or local business makes a great contribution, recognize it on social media and it will get shared!

6. **Use light-hearted, upbeat images or messages to spark a viral conversation:** Many of the most popular and viral messages on social media provide meaning along with a sense of humor or emotion. Developing a community is difficult work but it is important to be optimistic when approaching your messages – think about how inspiring folks in your community could promote your work by developing catchy pictures, videos or messages for the web.

7. **Cross-post to drive viral messages:** Don't forget that there are multiple ways to share messages beyond Facebook or Twitter. Consider sharing your blogs or YouTube videos on both your website and social media vehicles. The more you share, the more others will have an opportunity to view your story and share with their network. If you're promoting an event, don't be afraid to share information multiple times a day leading up to it. And don't be shy – if something's still relevant (or becomes relevant again) in a couple months, share again!

8. **As your social media network grows, use website analytics:** Private companies are using social media to understand how customers view them. There is no reason we shouldn't do the same. Be strategic and keep tabs on who your core followers are and what they are saying about you!

Northside Achievement Zone:
On May 3rd, 2012, NAZ recognized General Mills by linking an update to their profile, thanking them for organizing a book drive that resulted in almost 700 books for children in North Minneapolis. By linking to General Mills' Facebook page, all 20,000 GM followers got the update and learned about their partnership.

Like using RBA in your Promise Neighborhood, you should collect and aggregate data and share updates with your team about trends on your social media sites. The goal is to continuously learn and improve performance by lifting up what works! Try checking Facebook and Twitter analytics on a regular basis and put [Google Analytics](#) on your website.

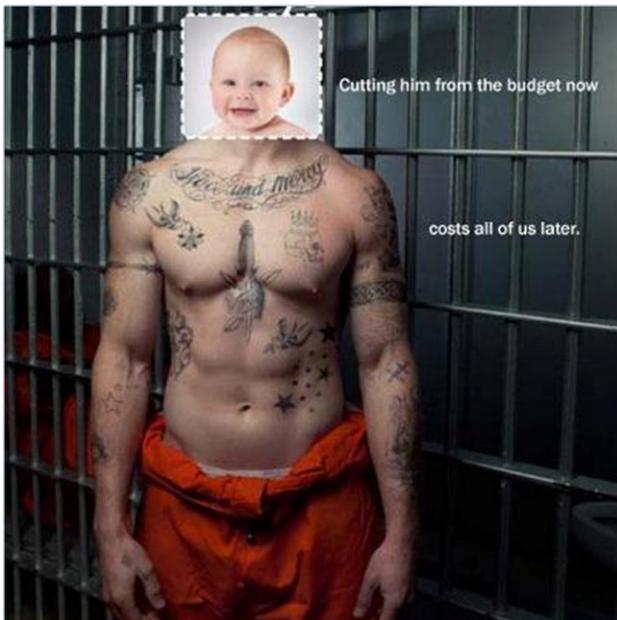


Figure 1: Children's Defense Fund shared this provocative photo in an effort to publicize the pipeline to prison problem

Sample Social Media Monthly Plan

[Click here for a Social Media Plan Template](#)

Below are the key elements of a strong social media plan. Use a calendar to identify when events are happening and produce a weekly or daily plan for what you plan to share with the community. Remember, this is not the only way to engage on social media. Stay close to Facebook and Twitter to share appropriate updates or stories.

September 2011 – Social Media Plan

Managed By: Promise Neighborhood Social Media Manager

Prepared For: Promise Neighborhood Senior Staff

Goal: Provide consistent schedule of social media contributions while allowing for timely posts on relevant topics each week

September						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Key Schedule Events	Starting	Ending	Social Media Posts/Updates
First Week of School	9/2/2011	9/8/2011	Facebook: Post on Partnership Details, Twitter; Reminder on School Supply Donations at Fieldhouse
Head Start/Early Head Start Parent-Teacher Conference	9/7/2011	9/10/2011	Facebook: Reminder of parent engagement importance; YouTube: Post parent stories, link on FB
Mexican Independence Day	9/16/2011	9/16/2011	YouTube Video Share of Mexican culture in Promise Neighborhood
International Day of Peace	9/21/2011	9/21/2011	Facebook/Twitter: Question about how families collectively celebrate peace in their neighborhood
Rosh Hashanah – School offices closed	9/28/2011	9/30/2011	Twitter/Facebook: Reminder of day care opportunities; Question - how residents celebrate holidays
Stan Berenstain’s Birthday	9/29/2011	9/29/2011	Twitter/Facebook: Create Poll for favorite Berenstain Bears Book – encourage reading to children

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor provide an opportunity to rebut an article or commentary, or provide a missing perspective. Below, we provide some tips for writing letters to the editor, and a draft that includes some of our core messaging as an example.

Tips for a Successful Letter to the Editor

- **Keep it short and to the point:** Letters to the Editor are usually 150-250 words and are in response to a recent article. Make sure to check the publication requirements before submitting.
- **Provide facts and anecdotes:** You want the letter to show your personal character but it also must be factual.
- **Be timely:** The letter should be submitted on the same day the original article was written if at all possible, and up to three days later if needed. Make it simple for the newspaper by including the content in the body of your email, rather than as an attachment.
- **Send to the appropriate publication contact:** Utilize the [Communications Consortium Media Center's \(CCMC\) resources on submission criteria](#) for letters to the editor. These criteria include contact information for the top 100 media outlets nationwide.

Sample Letter – In response to an article about school privatization

Subject: Re “Privatize School Education” by John Doe, August 9th, 2012.

Doe suggests that simply privatizing our education system will fix our racial achievement gap. While Doe makes valid points about the benefits of school privatization, he ignores the impact a collective community can have on student outcomes. Here in {Insert Community/Promise Neighborhood Name}, we wrap children in high-quality, coordinated health, social, community, and educational support from cradle to college to career. The results are astounding. No matter how good a school is (public or private), if a child doesn't have safe streets to get there and a stable home to return to, the educational outcomes won't improve. We have been able to get kids to class safely and on-time through our Bus for Success program. I am writing to encourage other local community-based organizations in our city to develop Promise Neighborhoods in their community.

A Promise Neighborhood is a community of opportunity that allows children to learn, grow, and succeed. Strong schools are at the heart of a strong Promise Neighborhood, but responsibility extends beyond the school walls. It includes the health clinic, the tenant association, even local grocery stores.

Simply privatizing schools is not enough. Improving education and breaking the cycle of generational inequity requires change in our entire community to improve the state of the neighborhood. Collectively, we can truly make a difference. To learn more about how to create a Promise Neighborhood in your community, visit www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Director of XXPN

Op-Eds

Getting an op-ed published is very difficult so do not get discouraged if at first you don't succeed. It is certainly more of an art than a science. Below are some tips for publishing an op-ed. We recommend visiting the Communications Consortium Media Center website at www.ccmc.org for more information.

What is an Op-Ed?

- An op-ed is an article written “OPposite the EDitorials” by people with expertise or experience on a topic.
- Op-eds provide an opinion of an author who is not affiliated with the publication itself.
- Op-eds are typically competitive and difficult to get published, requiring authors to provide articles that are timely, concise, and well-written.

Why Op-Eds?

- Op-eds are a great way to spark a conversation by getting topics or opinions important to you and your Promise Neighborhood in the public eye.
- Op-eds are among the most viewed sections of many news publications.
- Op-eds do not require “journalistic” writing to begin a conversation and rely instead on informed writers from all sectors to bring new information.
- Powerful op-eds with memorable stories can build recognition of the Promise Neighborhoods brand and inform policymakers, funders, and the general public about your efforts.

Tips for Successful Op-Eds

- **Be provocative:** Editors are looking for catchy articles that will generate buzz within a community. The less generic your message is, the better chance you have of getting published.
- **Make it timely:** Publishers and readers alike want to view topics that are dominating the news. Use current events as hooks to demonstrate how relevant your work is to the public.
- **Determine the best person to share your message:** Consider the message you are conveying and find a well-known person (the head of your Promise Neighborhood, a supportive politician, etc.) who can serve as the byline for the op-ed. While authors should certainly be passionate, passion alone is not enough. Ensure your choice of author has a strong level of credibility and expertise.
- **Acknowledge the opposition:** Some people will disagree with your message. Acknowledge them to add credibility, and a sense of humility, to your overall message. While you will not agree with your opposition, addressing their points can effectively convey your convictions when written effectively. It also allows you to provide recommendations for countering your opposition's viewpoints.
- **Determine the best publication:** Consider your audience before determining which publication to pursue for your op-ed. Promise Neighborhoods work with different people and organizations from a variety of sectors – the target audience of your op-ed should align with the target audience of the publication. Also, consider where your piece has the best chance of getting published. A Promise Neighborhood effort in Worcester, MA has a good chance of getting published in the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* but perhaps not in the *New York Times*.

- **Keep it short:** CCMC recommends that you keep your op-ed less than 750 words. USA Today expects between 650-750 words, and some publications, like the *New York Post*, ask that op-eds remain under 500 words. With such little space, it is essential to get right to the point and catch the reader's attention in the very first line.
- **Create a strong ending:** Many readers scan articles and focus on the final paragraph. Take the time to write a powerful final paragraph that wraps up your overall argument. One option is to conclude with thoughts about concepts introduced at the beginning of the article, thus closing the circle on the argument.
- **Be persistent:** You should generally submit to one publication at a time but editors can take several days to accept or reject your article. Follow up with your preferred publication and if you don't hear back, consider other publications. If all else fails, consider editing your op-ed down to approximately 150 words and submitting as a letter to the editor.

As for where to submit, there are resources online to help you find the appropriate contacts at both local and national publications. Below are a few options we at PNI trust for reaching your desired publication:

- [This link to CCMC's op-ed and LTE requirements page](#) identifies the top 100 publications with submission criteria.
- [This link to Time To Succeed's "Write a Letter to the Editor" page](#) allows you to input your zip code to find appropriate local publications.

The Huffington Post also provides ample opportunity to contribute to conversations about current events. Consider creating a blogger profile and contributing regularly to their online publication.

Below are a few articles and letters written by PolicyLink and Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink leaders:

- [Need Inspiration for Your Graduate? Start With the Time 100 List](#)
- [Holding Onto Harlem](#)
- [Sunday Dialogue: Mobility and Inequality in Today's America](#)

Press Releases

Press releases should be issued when you want to publicize news about a particular event, person or service. Press releases are often emailed to reporters, both local and national, and posted on your website. Some websites will repost your press release in its entirety. Some reporters will use it as a basis for an article.

Press Release Sample Template

{Logo}

Contact: Name
Telephone Number
Fax Number
Email

For Immediate Release

MAIN TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE HERE (IN ALL CAPITALS)
Subtitle Overview of Article

The first paragraph(s) get right to the point of the press release. What happened and where did it happen? You want the specifics of the release to jump out and capture the attention of your audience.

The middle paragraph(s) offer deeper analysis of the main topics. This will include details about who is involved and quotes from key players. This section of the press release also offers an opportunity to highlight the history of the topic at hand and illuminate the context of your press release.

The final paragraph(s) offer any closing details that are important, including stakeholders involved that may not be totally clear from the initial messages.

{Insert Boilerplate – Standard message about your initiative, expressing what you do for your community}

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**Note – the three #s mark the end of the press release*

Links to Past Press Releases

- [North Minneapolis Tapped for \\$28M Promise Neighborhood Investment](#)
- [PolicyLink Launches the Promise Neighborhoods Institute](#)
- [Joint Press Release between Harlem Children’s Zone and Goldman Sachs](#)

Strong Press Release Example

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood recently broke ground on an early childhood center. Below is the press release, followed by media pickup in the area. It's a little longer than what is needed, but they describe the newsworthy items very well.

BUFFALO PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD BREAKS GROUND ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER

***10,000 square foot facility will open in 2013 and serve 150 children;
\$1 million in funding provided by the John R. Oishei Foundation***

Buffalo, NY – Construction began today on a new early childhood education center that will help prepare children in one of Buffalo's most economically distressed communities for successful transitions to kindergarten, elementary school and beyond – the first step in the cradle-to-college-and-career continuum being implemented in the new Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in the 14215 zip code.

Community and local, state and federal government officials today joined representatives from the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in a ground breaking ceremony to celebrate the beginning of construction on BPN's education center at Bailey Avenue and Amherst Street in Buffalo.

Scheduled to open in 2013, the 10,000-square-foot facility will serve approximately one hundred fifty children from infancy to age 5. The center will be located across the street from the Westminster Community Charter School and will be operated by Buffalo Promise Neighborhood and Bethel Head Start.

"The early childhood education center will literally serve as the foundation for academic success for children in the Promise Neighborhood," said Mark J. Czarnecki, President of M&T Bank and Chairman of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Board of Directors. "Transforming an economically challenged neighborhood so that it can prosper again is a process that starts and ends with providing its children the opportunity to achieve this success."

"The early childhood education center will help nurture the community's youth in order to prepare them for elementary school, high school, college and beyond," said David K. Chamberlain, Vice Chairman, Westminster Foundation and CEO, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. "The construction of this center on a vacant site also continues the physical transformation of the local community with many more improvements in the months to come."

The early childhood education center is an integral component of BPN's *Early Foundations* initiative, part of their continuum of cradle-to-career solutions that integrates health, family, parenting, literacy and early learning services for children under the age of five and their families in the Promise Neighborhood. Other components include: outreach and new parent classes where every parent of a newborn will be offered coaching and parenting resources administered through Every Person Influences Children's (EPIC) *Ready, Set, Parent!* program; a high quality medical home to promote the importance of child health through the Community Health Center for Buffalo as well as the establishment of a student success center located within the Center.



In addition *Early Foundations* will build a unified and shared child health and cognitive development screenings system; through Read to Succeed Buffalo a literacy advocacy program will be implemented to improve early learning and literacy across all multiple settings that provide care for children; and, to address the epidemic of teen pregnancy follow the framework of a program developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

“As children travel along the cradle-to-career development path, they pass through several key transitions – the first of which is the transition from pre-school to kindergarten,” said Dr. Yvonne Minor-Ragan, President of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. “Our new center and the programs to be implemented through *Early Foundations* are intended to rally the community around the goal of preparing every young BPN child and family to successfully navigate through this critically important first transition.”

Funding for the early childhood education center includes a \$1 million grant from the John R. Oishei Foundation with additional funding from M&T Bank. The center was designed by Watts Engineers and construction will be done by SLR Contracting.

About Buffalo Promise Neighborhood: Founded in 2010, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit organization that seeks to improve performance at three schools on the northeast side of Buffalo – Bennett High School, Highgate Heights, and Westminster Community – and transform the surrounding community by providing a continuum of solutions to children and families, including neighborhood resources, streamlining family services and improving educational supports.

BPN is a unique public/private partnership that collaborates with a broad range of partners and service providers, including businesses, block clubs, non-profits, public entities and other organizations. BPN is supported through financial and human resources generously provided by M&T Bank as well as support through the Westminster Foundation. BPN also receives funding from U.S. Department of Education and the John R. Oishei Foundation. For more information, please visit www.buffalopromiseneighborhood.org.

News Coverage from Buffalo Press Release

Below are links to actual media in Buffalo. Note that some of the articles quote directly from the press release.

- [Future Bright in East Side Neighborhood](#)
- [Groundbreaking at Early Childhood Education Center](#)
- [Work begins on Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Center](#)