Tips for Spreading the Message of Inclusive Schools

National Inclusive Schools Week is an excellent opportunity to highlight the work your school or district has done to create an inclusive community which celebrates the achievements of diverse learners. During the *Week* you might hold events that warrant media attention. Below are some tips to help make the most of these opportunities.

Messengers:

Anyone can spread the message of inclusive schools. When reporters come to your school or you send out a press release don't forget the voices of all the members of the school community:

Students
Parents
Teachers
Principals
Counselors
Paraprofessionals
Community partners
District administrators

Ways to spread the message:

Press releases
Interviews
Newspaper guest columns
Letters to the editor
Newsletters to parents and others
Telephone voice mail greetings
On-hold messages
Website
Slogans
Bumper stickers, signs, and stickers (available from the Urban Collaborative)
Flyers

* Adapted from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform's Leadership Curriculum Module, Advocacy *for Middle-Grades Reform.*

Talking with Reporters: Tips for Media Interviews

1. Give yourself time to prepare. If you get an unexpected call from the media, find out the reporter's deadline and ask if you can call back. Even if you think you know the answers, it is always necessary to prepare.

2. Ask about the nature of the story and what the reporter is interested in. If you don't think you are the right person for the interview let the reporter know and if possible direct them to someone else more suitable.

3. Prepare talking points. Even if you have done similar interviews many times before, take a moment to write down 2-3 points you want to be sure you make.

4. Return media calls as soon as possible. It is important to call back quickly before the reporter's deadline and before he or she has gone to another source for the information.

5. Find out when the story is expected to appear. This will allow you to locate and save the article or record the broadcast.

6. Use everyday language. Remember that the reporter and his or her audience may not be familiar with acronyms, technical terms, or key issues in your field. Try to avoid jargon and instead use language that can be easily understood by the general public

7. Be flexible during the interview. Don't feel that you must only answer a reporter's specific questions. Steer any answers to your key messages. If the reporter asks, "Do you want to add anything else?" take the opportunity to mention or reiterate a key point.

8. Identify yourself as you would like your name to appear in print or on the air. Provide your full name and title and spell them. Ask the reporter to repeat the information to be sure it is correct. Avoid too many identifications as it can cause confusion.

9. Offer additional resources, including a web site if you have one.

10. Notify Jennifer Quinlan at jquinlan@edc.org so the story can be posted on the NISW web site.

* These tips were adapted from a piece designed for Education Development Center by their communications staff.

Example of a Good Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: John Doe
nisweek@school.org
123-456-7890

HOMETOWN DISTRICT TO CELEBRATE THE 4th ANNUAL NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK WITH TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS!

The *4th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week* will be celebrated December 6-10, 2004 in classrooms, schools, and communities throughout the country. This week recognizes the nation's progress and promotes action towards increasing the capacity of schools and communities to provide a quality education to an increasingly diverse student population, particularly to those who have disabilities. The *Week* is sponsored by the National Institute for Urban School Improvement at the University of Colorado, Denver and is a project of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. To learn more visit http://www.inclusiveschools.org.

Home town school district invites you to attend a celebration at Washington Elementary School at noon on December 10th. The whole school community will gather together to discuss the benefits of inclusive classrooms at Washington Elementary. Students will read the winning entries from the district-wide essay competition, *Learning Together Means Learning Better*. Teachers will share their experience learning new techniques for differentiated instruction from national expert, Lisa Differentiation. The 3rd grade choir and 5th grade band will also play pieces specially selected for this celebration. Two principals will share their schools' successful transformations to school-wide inclusion in every classroom, where students of varying abilities, needs, and strengths all lean side-by side. Principal Jennings says, "everyone at our school benefits from inclusive practices, students seem happier and our test scores have started to rise over the last two years. Other schools should learn from our experience."

To learn more about inclusive practices at Washington Elementary or about next week's celebration, call John Doe at 123-456-7890 or go to our district web site at www.hometown.us.