

***The Media Center:  
Your Media Program's Web Presence: A Tool for Advocacy and Marketing***

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Looking for a dynamic way to market and advocate for your school's media program? The perfect tool be right at your fingertips. A media program web site can be a versatile and far-reaching advocacy tool

Media center web cyber libraries are relatively common. The presence of virtual links says "We're here we're reaching out" to help our students and staff be successful users of information. Of course the web only as good as the accuracy of its links, its relevance to the curriculum, and its appeal to students.

What can happen if you do more and use the web site to showcase your school's media program to students, parents and the community? The outreach potential is unlimited. We'll take a look at some possibilities for advocacy and marketing.

**When are you open? Publicize basic information that isn't obvious to everyone.** We've all heard student complaints about not being able to get to the media center, seen the television commercial about the closed library, or heard "why do you need books when you have the Internet". If you have extended hours, broadcast them. The Rosholt, Wisconsin media center web page sends a welcoming message with its hours also prominently posted when you first enter the page. <

[http://www.rosholt.k12.wi.us/high\\_school/hs\\_library.htm](http://www.rosholt.k12.wi.us/high_school/hs_library.htm)> Post them on the school's home page, to show that the media center is one of the school's biggest investments.

All general information - staff, phone numbers and contact information - should be easy to find on a media center site. Describe resources and services (Check out the media services listed for New Trier (Illinois) Township High School <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/library/services.htm>).

Tell about notable features of the collection and photos that include kids using the media center. A map of the school, how to locate the media center *in* the school, and a map of the media center might be helpful. The Westminster School Library web site for the Westminster School in England has a nice easy to read floor plan. <

<http://library.westminster.org.uk/>>. The media program's mission statement also deserves a primary spot. Inform web site visitors that your program is there to support student learning and present policies in a positive, welcoming tone. The audience for this core information includes parents, the general public, prospective students and prospective teachers. Some of our new teachers already know a fair amount about our media program because they visited our site.

Pretty basic, right? Surprisingly this is sometimes hard to fine. What's next?

**Today's parents turn to the web for information.** Make sure the media center site is part of their visit to the school's site. What types of questions do parents ask about the media center during school visits or phone calls? Our most frequent questions have to do with technology. Parents inquire about software and hardware.

availability or compatibility with home computers, access to subscription databases, and online safety. I want to know how the students are using technology and if they have ample opportunity to use the media center and technology. Tell them.

What is collaboration anyway? The parent information page can be used to explain your collaborative process. We've created a *PowerPoint* presentation called, "What Does it Take?" which explain the media specialist/teacher planning and co-teaching that goes behind one successful student projects. We've used it at our open house and place it on the web for everyone to see.

**Have you noticed how many national campaigns to promote reading don't include the school media center?** Tell parents that your media center does promote reading. Our parents have inquired about what kids are reading and asked for reading ideas. When you answer that question you can also direct them to our web site—providing that information is on the web! One of our parents was delighted –and I think surprised – to see that our web site had summer reading suggestions. We've also included a list of media center books that support our reading series on the parent page. An example of a web page about a summer reading program can be found on a Trenton New Jersey web site: <http://www.trenton.k12.nj.us/read/> Be sure to check out the FAQ for parents.

#### **Other ideas:**

- McMeen Elementary in Denver, Colorado, prominently posted the "Parents and reading: How can help my child" list from the International Reading Association < <http://mcmeen.dpsk12.org/library.html> >
- The Baltimore Maryland Public Schools Media Page has a parent/student form to request materials for the school libraries, a great way to advocate by seeking input. For a list of forms visit the site @ <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/office/admin/forms/index.html>
- The parent page is also a good spot to reach out to volunteers. Describe why you need volunteers ("500 kids a day visit our media center!") and what volunteers can do to help you. Post an online volunteer application and contact information.

#### **Parent and family resources.**

Parents will appreciate quick and easy access to information about No Child left Behind, State, educational standards, online safety, parent organizations, and family resources. By including this on the media center page you are using—and showing your expertise as an information expert. Explain how the media program supports standards and other issues important to parents.

#### **Ideas:**

- The Paideia School in Georgia has a simple, but helpful collection of links for families and a list of library books that parents will find helpful. <http://www.paideiaschool.org/library/family.htm>
- A comprehensive example of general parent resources linked from a media center web site is Waldwick New Jersey Middle-Senior High School collection. < <http://www.waldwick.k12.nj.us/highschool/library/parents.html> >

**Do you write an annual report for your principal?** Put it on the web site so all the great things you do reach parents and the general public. I'm surprised—and disappointed by the

very limited number of annual reports posted media web sites. We maintain a daily media program activity log and post it on our web site at the end of each trimester.

Sites to visit:

- A very professionally presented annual report is at the Springfield Township, Pennsylvania, High school Library web site: <http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/> (select the annual report links)
- A thorough example of an annual report that emphasizes reading is the Lawrence Kansas High School 2004 report. An impressive photo gallery sends an exciting message about the excitement of reading. A list of groups that use the library for meetings sends a message of a welcoming atmosphere. Check it out @ <http://library.lhs.usd497.org/2004AnnualReport.html>

Presentations and reports presented to administrative groups or the school board should be uploaded to the web site as well. Board reports are public information. Web-savvy parents and taxpayers who visit your web site need to know about the great things that are going on; they may become your biggest supporters when they really find out what your program contributes to student learning

Along with your own reports be sure to link to the **Media Program Impact studies a prominent spot**. Parents, board members and taxpayers may find the reports interesting, but they will definitely want to know how your program compares. Be sure to include comparison information. One collection of links to impact studies to use as a reference is @ <http://www.iema-ia.org/IEMA119.html>

**Do the comparison studies point out how badly your collection needs updating?** Are you having a campaign to acquire cash donations or books? The Person County (North Carolina) Schools and Media Centers are using the web site to publicize their need for books. <http://www.roxboro-courier.com/newsnowstories/ts102304-3.htm>

In 2004 the media centers in Farmington, Minnesota were awarded over \$600,00 by their school board to be updating the collections. An outline of their ongoing presentations and reports is an example of advocacy on the web. The outline includes links to standards, reports and multiple documents. This proactive approach to what we do and why we matter can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.farmington.k12.mn.us/media/mediapresentation.htm> The thorough list of resources the approaches the media specialists used is an excellent resource for media specialists

If you do campaign for books on the web site be sure to include links to the specific parts of the impact studies that show the connection between reading achievement and school media centers.

**Media program news, newsletters, information about special events or projects belong on the web.** Media program newsletters seem to be as scarce as annual reports. Turn printed newsletters into PDF files so they can be uploaded or create a web based newsletter.

**Tell people how kids are using the media center and information technology.** Since we often get that question I created a chart that explains which projects have high degree media/technology integration and illustrate teacher/media specialist collaboration. (Select the Student Projects & Program Reports button on the WMS web site.) Do you have a guest speaker, an open house, and a special collaborative project with another agency such as the County Historical Society or a civic group? The Peshtigo, Wisconsin, Elementary Learning Center's media specialist works collaboratively with the Peshtigo Fire Museum and made a web site about the great Peshtigo fire of 1871 Publicize those events and partnerships!

**Support teachers and gain support for what you do by linking to their web sites or creating one c link to teacher's assignments.** Media staff at a Burnsville, Minnesota, elementary school post teacher' lesson plans and assignments each week on the school web site. The New Trier Township High School site has a link to teacher assignments prominently displayed at the top of the media center site. < <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/library/> > As your web site supports others you are advocating for your program.

**Don't forget your primary audience**—your students! Send a message that the site is there to help students be successful and maybe even have some fun while they are learning or when they need a break. Include links to fun sites for kids that will make them want to visit the site even if they don't have to. Two other examples are from Columbus School in Trenton, New Jersey and St. Joseph Illinois. [http://www.trenton.k12.nj.us/columbus/library/Fun\\_Links.htm](http://www.trenton.k12.nj.us/columbus/library/Fun_Links.htm) and <http://webserver.stjoe.k12.il.us/library/fun.htm>

As I searched for examples I was excited by what I saw – but also disappointed in the limited number of school web sites that do go beyond a cyber library and reading promotion. So what's a busy media specialist to do? Simply get started. If you publish a newsletter, press release or take photos of student projects then about the web! It's worthy of a print PR it's likely worthy of the web site. When you get questions from parents or the public begin a FAQ file that can become a web site.

How do you get people to visit the site? Direct people to the web when they ask questions. Include information about the web site in school and district letters; send it to the local newsletter. Promote, publicize and publicize! Make your web site an ongoing part of your advocacy program.

## **SIDEBAR**

**Web sites to visit** (Visited December 2004)

*Catherine Palmer School, Australia*

[http://www.palmdps.act.edu.au/resource\\_centre/rc\\_main.htm](http://www.palmdps.act.edu.au/resource_centre/rc_main.htm)

*Lawrence High School Library, Kansas*

<http://library.lhs.usd497.org/home.html>

*Springfield Township H.S., Pennsylvania*

<http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/>

St. Clair Middle School Michigan  
<http://www.east-china.k12.mi.us/scm/media/>

Winona Middle School Media Program, Minnesota  
<http://wwrschooltoday.com/winonamiddle/mediacenter>

**International Award Winners (2000 – 2003)**  
[http://iasl-slo.org/web\\_winners.html](http://iasl-slo.org/web_winners.html)

**Huge collections of links to media center web sites:**

School libraries on the Web  
<http://www.sldirectory.com>

School-Libraries-Net  
<http://www.school-libraries.net>

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