PHOTO: KARI WILCHER

Eco-Schools U.S. Press Guide

ABOVE: A student at G.W. Carver Elementary in Richmond Hill, GA collects seeds for study.

Congratulations on your work to advance environmental education and sustainability in your school, district, and community!

Let's share your Eco-School's accomplishments and dedication with local media. Below is a brief guide to assist you in identifying and reaching out to the press. If you have any inquiries, don't hesitate to contact our team at ecoschoolsus@nwf.org.

Before you begin, we recommend getting in touch with your District's Media, Communications, or Marketing Department (where applicable) to collaborate effectively. This partnership will help ensure compliance with any policies and could provide support from those who are most familiar with your local environment, including potential media contacts and outreach methods.

If your District lacks a dedicated communications contact, this document will equip you with some helpful information needed to proceed. It includes guidance on how to identify the press, pitch your story, follow up, track progress, and even features a sample email template.

IDENTIFYING THE PRESS IN YOUR AREA

Both broadcast and local newspapers may be interested in learning more about your efforts and the work you're doing.

To identify local broadcast outlets and their websites, you can Google "ABC [city]" or "NBC [city]" and the online news page should appear in your searches. Many broadcast news outlets have contact pages listed on their websites where reporters, their coverage areas, and emails or phone numbers can be found.

- If reporters are listed, look for those with the title 'producer' or 'assignment editor' and that cover general assignment news, local news, city or metro news, education, or environment.
- Avoid contacts like 'news director' and 'anchor' as these people aren't usually involved with the development of news stories.

- If reporters aren't listed, you can go to the 'Contact Us' page where broadcast stations will often have a 'News desk' or tip email and/or phone number available to submit a press release or story tip to.
- Sometimes this appears as a submission box where you can upload a file of your press release and write a message.
- We encourage sending your press release and/or pitch to the local ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX stations.

Local newspapers and their online websites will also often have reporters listed or ways to email their editors and/or submit a tip. Similar to broadcast stations, look for reporters who cover local news, city or metropolitan news, education, environment, and general assignment news.

PHOTO: JAN ABERNATHY

ABOVE: Mrs. Abernethy's 5th Grade Class at East Elementary School create and maintain Schoolyard Habitat.

HOW TO PITCH YOUR STORY

In some cases, sending a press release (if available) may be enough to pique the interest of press in your area. Other times, you'll need to send them a pitch email that describes to reporters why the story matters and is important to the community. An important thing to keep in mind is the length of your pitch. Keep it as succinct/short and sweet as possible (roughly 3-6 sentences) If your email is too long they likely won't read it, so don't worry about including too much 'fluff'. You can find an example pitch email at the end of this document.

To provide more context, consider telling the reporter some of the below (it's okay not to include all of these, use this as a guide to convey your story and why it matters):

- Why their readers or viewers would care or be interested
- What impact and/or benefits it will have
- Data or information about actions that have been taken, projects that have been completed, changes or progress, events held, etc. (e.g., # of MMP campaign letters sent)
- What photos or visuals you can provide. Some visuals a reporter might be interested in include:
    - Photos or videos of students in action (note: please be sure to follow your school's or district's policies regarding publicly sharing images of students)
    - Events/collaboration with community partners to either invite press to attend or share photos with after
    - Photos or videos of completed projects (e.g., gardens planted, letters written, clean up events, bike & roll to school, etc.)

If your email is getting too long, you can convey the information in bullet points to make the email easily skim-able.

PHOTO: DAVID MIZEJEWSKI

A REPORTER IS INTERESTED, NOW WHAT?

If reporters express interest, they will likely wish to talk to your school or Action Team's leaders. When sharing your story, make sure to inform the reporters about the most relevant spokesperson or point of contact for your school's sustainability efforts. We suggest providing their positions or titles as well.

Additionally, some reporters may want to visit the school or see projects firsthand, so be sure to prepare for that possibility.

FOLLOW UP

- Don't be afraid to follow up with reporters one or two times after you send your press release or first pitch your story.
- If you don't hear back from the first person you pitched, it's okay to reach out to a different reporter to see if they might be interested.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

If you don't gain press interest in your initial outreach it's okay! Continue to track progress of your projects, record data and benchmarks and take photos. You can try again once you have more details and progress to share.

Thank you for your work and dedication to making positive impacts in your school, district, and community! The work you're doing is important.

We would be delighted to help amplify your stories through our communication channels. Please share any published press with us via email or social media so that we can spread the word more broadly and celebrate your achievements with a wider audience.

EMAIL: ecoschoolsus@nwf.org

INSTAGRAM: @nwfeducation

FACEBOOK: Eco-Schools U.S.

HASHTAG: #ecoschoolsus

TOP LEFT: Crossfield Elementary, students collaborating on the Restoring Biodiversity Balance action card.

BOTTOM LEFT: Park Day School, students maintaining their schoolyard gardens.

Sample Pitch Email

Please note that the information in the sample email is fictional. It may draw from real school achievements and popular fiction, but it is meant only for this template.

Subject: Students Inspire Mayor Smith to Fund Monarch Conservation

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Dear ABC4 News Desk,

I'm reaching out to share a story idea that will hopefully inspire the community. As part of our Eco-Schools certification, second-grade students at Milkweed Middle School in Rivendell wrote 50 letters to Mayor Smith asking her to aid in monarch butterfly conservation by participating in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge.

She recently visited our school to meet with students and learn about monarch butterflies, how schools can engage with conservation efforts, and community-driven solutions. As a result, Mayor Smith actually committed to setting aside funds next year to support planting native milkweed - all because of these kids' enthusiasm and eagerness.

We have photos available from the letter writing and Mayor Smith's visit, we're also happy to provide quotes from students or staff. Let me know if you're interested, I can be reached at the contact info below.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Best,

Bill Baggins

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