

## Proofread, proofread, proofread!

Maintaining credibility with your parents through your newsletter

***“Proofread, proofread, proofread!”***

Carol Tilstra Nash

Parents are trusting you to educate their child in writing, spelling and grammar, among other things. Your newsletter needs to demonstrate that your school has mastered those skills!

### **Include good news**

Have a standard place (as the first item would be good) for sharing good news about your school. You may not have something to share every week, but you should aim for at least monthly.

### **Other information can be used sparingly**

Including other information like general encouragement, personal messages, parenting ideas or resources is fine, but not essential. And if included, keep items short so it is easy for parents to get to the essential information.

### **A sample template (and saving you time by having teachers type their information directly in)**

I've created a sample template in Google Docs. I chose this format for two reasons. First, it can be opened and edited by Microsoft Word. But secondly, if your school has more than one teacher, you can put this template in a Google Drive account where you and your staff can open and edit it simultaneously. Meaning: **no one has to type in, or copy and paste content from all the teachers.** Here's how.

#### **One time set-up**

- If your school doesn't already have a Google Drive account (free, unless you plan to store more than 15 GB) create a Google account and opt for the Google Drive feature.
- Once signed in to Google Drive, click the red "new" button on the left to create and name a new folder.
- Drag and drop the newsletter template onto your Google Drive and into that folder.
- Select the folder (click once on it).
- In the bar above the list of your folders and documents, click on the link icon (it looks like a simplified chain link).
- In the dialog box, click "sharing settings" in the bottom left corner.

- In the new dialog box, in the top gray box with "anyone with the link...", select "can edit."
- In the bottom half of that same dialog box, where it says "enter names or email addresses," type in the email addresses of each of your staff, teachers or volunteers who will edit the newsletter. Then select "can edit" from the box to the right of that list you just typed.
- Click done.
- Google will send an email to each of the people you listed with a link to the folder you selected. Those people will be able to edit documents you put in that folder.

### **Weekly editing**

- Each week you can create a new copy of the original template and put it in that folder for your staff to access and edit.
- Require teachers to format their information in a consistent manner so your newsletter is clear and easy to read.
- You could also give access to a volunteer or other staff member who then proofreads, cleans up formatting, prints a hard copy to send home with all children AND emails a pdf of the digital version to parents (you don't want to send them an editable link, like you did with your staff).
- Small note: the Google Docs template I created uses the paragraph formatting styles: normal text, title and subtitle which you can use to easily format your additional text. Feel free to redefine them, but then ensure that you use them, so your formatting is consistent.

### **Creating your own template**

If you choose to create your own template, please make sure it includes these features.

- The publication date is clear, at the top and in a consistent location.
- Information is categorized and clustered by good news (at the top) school-wide (including calendar items), preschool, elementary and academy.
- Headlines for content are clear, more than catchy (A++ work if you can manage clear AND catchy.)
- Events which have changed time, place, location or other significant detail are in bold face and underlined. And they include a note about the change.
- All events should be in the calendar and you can note details are explained in the appropriate section below.

**Delegating:** A volunteer and staff members can type in content and/or proofread.

**Credits:** Thank you to the teachers whose notes I've copied from their school's newsletters. (Although I disguised the names, since I edited their words freely and they don't need to get the blame for that.)

**Binder tab:** Ongoing (put in front of the January tab in your binder)

**School size:** All