



SBCSS Brand Ambassadors Guide

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

SBCSS Brand Ambassadors Guide

July 2015

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Welcome!

You are a San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Brand Ambassador

Within the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools organization, employees are the first and often best sources of information about what's taking place in our programs and classrooms and throughout San Bernardino County school districts. As a Brand Ambassador, you are part of a program designed to support and encourage both internal communication among SBCSS staff and engagement with a growing base of external public education stakeholders.

Telling Our Story

We have plenty of good news to talk about at County Schools and in our school districts throughout the county!

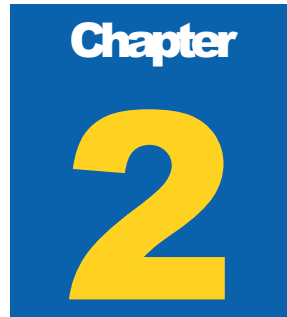
You have likely seen many examples of success in your own department, program or classroom. Our vast community of stakeholders is often not fully aware of these accomplishments. Sometimes they hear only small details of successful program achievements outside the context of all that takes place at SBCSS.

That's where the Brand Ambassadors enter. With this role, you can help make the connections between the great work taking place in schools and programs throughout the county to support students, families and staff, and how those efforts are part of our overall mission to *transform lives through education*.

Becoming Part of the Plan

What you as a Brand Ambassador do for SBCSS is vital. County Superintendent Ted Alejandre is committed to creating a culture of open and transparent communication. The organization's Strategic Communication's Plan, adopted in September 2014, impresses the importance of internal communication, community engagement, brand awareness and coordinated outreach. The role of the Brand Ambassador relates directly to these priorities.

Welcome to the Brand Ambassador team!



Role of the Brand Ambassador

Brand Ambassadors are representatives throughout the organization with a wide array of positions, skills and talents.

Great care has been taken in selecting you as a Brand Ambassador!

Brand Ambassadors are representatives from throughout the organization with a wide array of positions, skills and talents. Brand Ambassadors have imaginative spirits, positive outlooks, and the ability to see both the importance of sharing the positive things taking place in our public schools and promoting the SBCSS Brand. We trust you will put your best foot forward!

Your Role as an Ambassador

Each Brand Ambassador knows the unique strengths of his or her branch, department, program or school. Diversity of talent, experience, and perspective among all Ambassadors brings benefit to the program as it allows each Ambassador to learn from the sharing of ideas and experiences of others. Opportunities will be available to you through the program to receive training to support you in your role as an Ambassador, and also to learn from and share with other Brand Ambassadors.

What will you do as an Ambassador to get SBCSS news and the SBCSS Brand out to our employees, families, districts and community of stakeholders (business and labor partners, government and elected official, non-profit and faith-based leaders, etc.)? Specifically, you are being asked to:

- Serve as a liaison between your department/program and the Communications Department to strengthen horizontal bands of communication across the organization through sharing of news and ideas.

- Take photos and write captions of County Schools' and other education-related programs and events, and write accompanying captions, for posting to the SBCSS Facebook page.
- Suggest *Spotlight* feature stories for the SBCSS website.
- Suggest and submit news ideas to the Communications Department using the news submission template.
- Look for ways to spotlight and recognize students, teachers and staff through stories, on eNet and with the Superintendent's Inspire Awards or other recognitions.
- Meet quarterly with other Brand Ambassadors and Communications Department staff to discuss news, engagement and branding opportunities.

In addition, Brand Ambassadors have a special responsibility to represent the organization. That means:

- Acting at all times with courtesy and professionalism.
- Demonstrating the excellence in service in all you do.
- Remaining upbeat and positive to better engage the public in cultivating support and enthusiasm for programs and achievements.
- Keeping in touch with managers, Communications Department staff and stakeholders in order to garner support for efforts and activities.

Embody the Brand

Be a champion for Brand engagement.

What will it take to engage SBCSS employees as Brand champions? For starters, everyone needs to believe the organization's core beliefs, mission and Brand promise.

*“With integrity, collaboration,
excellence and leadership,
we will transform lives
through education.”*

*San Bernardino County
Superintendent of Schools
Brand Promise Statement
November 2014*

What is a Brand?

A brand is defined as a promise a company or organization makes to its customers. A brand is the cumulative result of every experience, communication and reference made by or about our organization over time as experienced by others. Simply put, a brand is not something we buy; it's something we build.

John Pepper, chairman of Proctor and Gamble once said: *“Passion and love for a brand and its consumers sustain us. For how can we ever devote our continued highest energy to something if we don't believe in it passionately.”*

What does brand engagement look like?

- Be a cheerleader in supporting the superintendent's goals for a culture of open communication. Effective internal communication is the first step to successful external communications.
- As liaison between your department and Communications, impress the importance of brand awareness, coordinated outreach and proactive planning with staff you work with directly.
- Become familiar with the organization's key messages, and elements of its mission, intent, values, and services.
- Do your part to ensure message consistency throughout the organization by coordinating and aligning messages, visual brand identity, delivery methods and strategies, following the SBCSS Style Guide, using the eNet Template Library and being a resource to others in your department.
- Encourage engagement in and support of SBCSS sponsored programs, our school districts and public education.

Be a “Good News” Ambassador

What makes a good news story?

There are many sources of good news. When speculating what will be of interest to our many difference audiences, one way to do that might be to apply the “Gee Whiz/So What?” rule. Will our audience’s reaction to what we’re telling them be an interested “Gee Whiz!” or a dismissive “So what?” What should you look for when considering whether to share a story or the Brand? Here are some general ideas to try:

- Look for fun, engaging ways to demonstrate teaching and learning.
- Look for improvements and measures of progress.
- Look for connections linking student/school/organizational success as part of a larger collaborative effort.

External News

Brand Ambassadors also keep on the lookout for anything that not only promotes SBCSS, but also school districts or collaborative efforts. Consider opportunities that:

- Typically involve more than one school or community.
- May relate to improvements – academic achievement, or model programs, for instance – at a school that are being duplicated in other schools and involve a broader, perhaps countywide audience.
- May involve collaborative efforts with other agencies, business or community partners.

- May be more suited to a *Spotlight* story on the SBCSS website regarding a featured student, teacher or program that merits broad exposure.

Internal News

Internal news covers events or issues that impact employees of County Schools. This can be an event, such as a Blood Drive hosted by Employee Connection, information on changes in health and welfare benefits, or an update by the county superintendent on the organization’s strategic plan.

Other internal news items to keep an eye out for are staff recognitions and awards, and spotlights on our exemplary staff and programs.

Internal news items are posted on eNet, the internal website for County Schools staff (<http://enet.sbcss.k12.ca.us>). Some items with broad consequence – like the oath of office for the county superintendent – may be featured in news releases or on County Schools’ external website (www.sbcss.k12.ca.us).

Keep your Eyes Open

The old saying still holds true: A picture speaks a thousand words. There are stories in pictures all around us. If you find a subject interesting, chances are that someone else will, too. Let your imagination come up with some creative, appropriate, and intriguing ways to share these stories. Consider:

- Staff or students who received local, state, or national honor or recognition.
- An unusual or creative project or program that is visually appealing.
- An effective program, teacher, volunteer, or business partner.
- Education-oriented partnerships with outside groups such as colleges or businesses.
- Student activities or events.

“Of all of our inventions for mass communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language.”

— Walt Disney

Tips of the Trade

A few tips of the trade for the novice or most experienced Brand Ambassador

As a Brand Ambassador, you will be contributing to a number of resources to help share the SBCSS Brand and good news. Good communication requires a command of some basic “tools” – words and pictures. Here are a few general writing tips to keep in mind when writing short captions or story submission items.

- Think, gather facts and organize information before you write. Make sure all facts are accurate.
- Use simple words and uncomplicated, short sentences.
- Avoid educational jargon. You may know what “differentiated” or “rubric” means, but your audience may not. Avoid acronyms (LCAP, SELPA, etc.) when possible. If you must use them, tell your audience up front what the acronyms mean.
- Use action verbs and write in the active voice.
- Write in the third person.
- Avoid unnecessary and irrelevant information.
- Avoid clichés, slang, humor or anger showing up in your writing.
- Never use a bigger word than you need to express your meaning.
- Include quotes to liven up the writing, but be sure to capture accurate quotes and properly attribute them.

- Be conscious of style choices; don't overuse underlining or boldfacing.
- Practice showing rather than telling.
- Be direct – readers don't have much time, and narrative shouldn't hinder exhibition of the Brand.
- Avoid including personal information about staff or students.
- Adhere to the basic rules of grammar and punctuation. Helpful resources here include *The Associated Press Stylebook*, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White, and *The Gregg Reference Manual* by William Sabin, or the SBCSS Style Guide (available on eNet).
- Make sure all names are spelled correctly and that first and last names, titles, department, office or school locations are listed.
- Consider which publication a story or photo might best be suited for prior to submission submission?
 - Aspire and Inspiration: *Inspiration* is a monthly update from County Superintendent Ted Alejandre and highlights recent news and issues in the county, or in schools and districts. *Aspire* is a quarterly on-line education magazine, highlighting programs, services and events with a countywide focus.
 - SBCSS Website Spotlight: Featured on County Schools' website – www.sbcss.k12.ca.us -- Spotlights programs and services that can be current events either at County Schools or events taking place with a countywide education emphasis.
 - SBCSS Social Media: County Schools' social media coverage includes Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Postings include daily events, captured through summaries and images that highlight education-related activities countywide.
 - eNet: The internal website for County Schools' employees (<http://enet.sbcss.k12.ca.us>), stories and photos are centered around activities, events, news and issues that pertain to organizational staff.
 - News Release: Posted to County Schools' website (www.sbcss.k12.ca.us), news releases are information shared with the media to garner coverage for SBCSS events, programs, issues or news that impacts schools, districts, communities and the public at-large.



Communicating as a Team

Communication with one another is crucial.

As a Brand Ambassador, you are part of County Schools' overall strategic communications efforts. Regular communication among team members is essential to the success of the Brand Ambassador Program and to each Ambassador's effectiveness.

Knowing your Team

Good communication begins with coordination and collaboration. To assist you in your role as Brand Ambassador, Communications Department professionals will be part of your team, and available to support you and provide expertise when needed. Let's meet the team:

- Chief Communications Officer Christine McGrew leads the Communications Department and is responsible for implementation of the organization's Strategic Communications Plan and the Brand Ambassadors Program.
- Communications Manager Dan Evans is the department's primary news writer, for both external and internal news, including website stories and social media postings. He will be your contact for story submissions and related questions.
- Website/Social Media Content Manager Ben Mesa develops and monitors content on County Schools' Internet and Social Media sites, and can be contacted for information about photos, videos and other digital files.

- Communications Specialist James Fields will serve as your Brand Ambassador liaison and is your go-to person for all questions and issues related to consistent identity and promotion of the SBCSS Brand.
- Office Specialist III Irma Iaquina administrates office operations supporting all logistics and department calendar items, and can be contacted for assistance in all matters to route information and questions accordingly.

Staying in Touch

Keeping open lines of communication is important, but it doesn't need to be time-consuming. Often, a quick email is all that's necessary to share a great story idea or photo. Additionally, Brand Ambassadors will meet quarterly for training, to provide feedback and to share inspiring ideas and practices.

A Thank You to our Ambassadors

Many responsibilities come with being a Brand Ambassador.

We appreciate your commitment!

Lastly, a word of support and appreciation to you, our SBCSS Brand Ambassadors. As a frontline communicator for County Schools, we will provide you with a variety of resources to help make your new role a fun, engaging, fulfilling and productive one.

We want to thank each and every Ambassador who is willing to assist in sharing the great stories we see around us each day. Your role is an important one in this process, and expectations are high that your efforts will move SBCSS toward even more success for the students we serve.

We anticipate much Good News in the future and look forward to your role in sharing it!

SBCSS Brand Ambassadors Guide

Appendix

Resources & Templates

Story Submission Template
Photo Submission Guidelines
Information Release Form
Policies and Procedures

Appendix

Story Submission Template

- Why:** Be sure to start with the most important information first and answer the question, “Why should I care?”
- What:** Briefly describe the purpose and details of the event or activity here. Boldface words or short phrases that encapsulate the event or activity or its theme. Do not include details involving time or location here. Sentences should be short, direct and evocative for reader.
- When:** **x:00 a/p.m.** on **<Day of week>day, <Month><day>, 2012.**
- Where:** **<Location/Name of school>, <Street address, community, and ZIP code>.**
- Who:** Optional. If dignitary or special guest is attending, include short sentence, name, and title of special guest or guests.
- Background:** Substitutes for the “why” of the event or activity. Include some background of the event or activity, how it came to be, or any interesting facts about it in narrative form. Should include 1-3 sentences.

#

Appendix


Photo Submission Guidelines


1. Make sure the photo has a subject for focus. Try to avoid clutter in the photograph – plants sticking out of heads, poles directly behind subjects, etc.
2. Keep subjects simple – if someone is receiving an award, have a picture taken with the person holding the award or certificate.
3. Identify the person(s) in the photo. Include names and titles of those in the photo starting from left to right. Exception – large group photo where identifications would read like a phone book.
4. Provide basic information about the subject of the photo. Answer basic questions of who, what, when and where to provide caption information for the photograph.
5. Shoot tightly – try to fill the viewfinder with the subject. Taking a photo from 10-12 feet away from the subject with lots of carpet, ceiling, wall space, etc., detracts from the subject of the photograph.
6. Don't be afraid to take multiple photos of the same subject. Some poses are better than others. A genuine smile in a subject makes a much better photograph than a blank expression. Talk to your subject and be encouraging.
7. If you have the opportunity to edit photos with a digital camera, take advantage. Check to see if the subject's eyes are closed or he/she has an awkward look. Try to get the best photo the first time, but don't be afraid to try again after viewing results.
8. Avoid backlit backgrounds. Shooting with the sun behind subjects will result in shadows across faces and hard-to-read photographs. Same for shooting inside with windows, doorways in background. Backlighting makes for poorly contrasted photos.
9. For events with students participating, make sure to check to see if photo/media releases are available or if arrangements need to be made to exclude access to certain populations of students, such as those who are in juvenile hall facilities (below is a copy of County Schools' releases in both English and Spanish).
10. Be sure to use the camera in the auto-flash mode when indoors and in low light settings.
11. Directions for uploading photos can be found on eNet under the Brand Ambassador's link.

Appendix

Information/Photo Release Exhibit

(download at enet.sbcss.k12.ca.us)

	<i>San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools</i>	
	Information/Photo Release Form	
Student Name: _____ Phone: _____		
Address/City/Zip: _____		
<hr/>		
<p>I, _____, give authorization and consent for the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) and organizations/associations connected with SBCSS to use my child's name, photographs, video camera recordings and interview comments for educational and promotional purposes. I understand that these items may be distributed to individuals, groups and the news media and published in, but not limited to, advertisements, news releases, newsletters, slide shows, video presentations and the World Wide Web. I understand that published materials may identify students as special education or alternative education and could include references to various special needs based on the program.</p>		
_____ Signature 11/14	_____ Parent/Guardian Signature (If under 18)	_____ Date
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	<i>Superintendente de las Escuelas del Condado de San Bernardino</i>	
	Formulario de autorización para publicar fotografías e información	
Nombre del estudiante: _____ Teléfono: _____		
Domicilio/Ciudad/Código Postal: _____		
<hr/>		
<p>Yo, _____, doy mi autorización y consentimiento para que el Superintendente de las Escuelas del Condado de San Bernardino (SBCSS por sus siglas en ingles) y organizaciones/asociaciones afiliadas con SBCSS usen el nombre de mi hijo(a), fotografías, grabaciones en videocámara y comentarios de entrevistas de mi hijo(a) para propósitos educativos y promocionales. Entiendo que estos artículos pueden ser distribuidos a individuos, grupos y medios de comunicación y publicados en, pero no limitados a anuncios, comunicado de noticias, boletín informativo, exposición de diapositivas, presentaciones en video en la Red Mundial. Entiendo que el material publicado puede identificar a los estudiantes como educación especial o educación alternativa y pudiera incluir referencias de varias necesidades especiales basadas en el programa.</p>		
_____ Firma 11/14	_____ Firma del Padre/Tutor (Si es menor de 18 años)	_____ Date
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