
COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS—SPREADING THE WORD

Taunton Public Schools

Taunton, Massachusetts

By utilizing bulletin board space in a large number of prominent city businesses, Taunton Public Schools aimed to communicate to a larger audience on a regular basis, showcase the excitement of learning in its schools, and inform additional people about the Massachusetts Education Reform and its impact on student outcomes. As part of Project B.E.S.T. (Building Educational Success Together), a team comprised of the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor of Taunton, and the schools' Community Liaisons proposed partnership opportunities to leading businesses in the greater Taunton area. One such opportunity enabled each partnering business to provide bulletin board space in their facility for the respective partnering school. The goal of the Community Bulletin Board project was to spread the word that Taunton Schools and its students were everyone's investment—education is a shared responsibility.

Once a business partner committed to providing bulletin board space, school representatives (usually the principal and a teacher) visited the company, located the bulletin board site, measured the space, and developed an agreeable system and timetable for installing and updating the bulletin board. Businesses were asked to notify their employees via newsletter or e-mail that this would be a new addition to a specific space, to share news of the partnership agreement, and to generate some excitement for this addition. In some instances, the bulletin boards were in company-only space and benefited employees only. However, in a number of instances the business partners were public entities—the local hospital, banks, the local electric company, the local newspaper and a mall department store. In the public spaces, a large number of citizens viewed the bulletin boards.

The greatest challenges, once businesses understood that they had no responsibility beyond providing the space, were to identify school staff members who would assume the responsibility for maintaining the bulletin boards and to establish a feasible schedule of updating the Community Bulletin Boards. The staff challenge was addressed at a faculty meeting when the purpose of the Community Bulletin Board space was clearly outlined, and the idea of rotating the responsibility among several staff members was adopted. It was agreed that the parent of each child whose work would be displayed on the Community Bulletin Boards should grant special permission and that last names of students would be omitted.

The challenge of time stemmed from developing monthly themes and content for the boards. Staff members were exhausted from updating the displays so frequently. In response, all bulletin boards will be changed at least seasonally during the school year with an eye toward a theme that would work well over the summer months. Some schools and their business partners have elected to continue to change the bulletin boards on a six-week rotation. Business partners and school staff members have been satisfied with this new timeline.

This practice cost the district very little money. On one occasion, a company did not have a bulletin board but did agree to designate space. The district purchased the bulletin board for the company. Material and project costs that were related to the students' work to be displayed on the Community Bulletin Boards were part of the operating budget of each participating school. Time costs associated with going to the business to change the Community Bulletin Boards were generally incorporated into salaried employees work responsibilities.

The Community Bulletin Boards disseminate information, showcase educational excellence, create goodwill in the community, and are entertaining for the viewing public. This practice reaches a very large number of people, is easy to implement, provides a worthwhile community service project for students (development of the boards), communicates favorable information about a school system to the general public, provides an opportunity for people to chat about education, and is viewed by the receiving businesses as a colorful interlude amidst their business flyers and other communications. A Community Bulletin Board is a great way to reach the broader public.

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