

PRSSA



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High School Outreach Guide

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Dear PRSSA Member,



Welcome to the PRSSA High School Outreach Guide. This resource is designed for your Chapter to connect with local high school students, introducing them to the world of public relations and the exciting opportunities available through PRSSA. Whether your goal is to advocate for the PR industry, provide mentorship, or give back to the community, this guide will help you with practical strategies and insights to ensure a successful outreach experience.

High school outreach is an excellent way to promote public relations and PRSSA and a chance for your Chapter to grow as a team and develop essential skills. Engagement is key to successful outreach, so make your presentations dynamic, interactive, and relatable. Keep the connection going after your event by maintaining contact and offering mentorship. Most importantly, have fun with it! Your enthusiasm will inspire the next generation of PR professionals.

Every school is different, and so is every Chapter. You can adapt these suggestions to fit the needs of your audience and your Chapter's goals. The key is to create meaningful connections that help high school students see public relations as a career worth exploring.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding high school outreach, please reach out.

Best,

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Purpose of Outreach

The purpose of high school outreach is to:

- Educate high school students about public relations and PRSSA.
- Mentor students, giving them insights into college and career paths in PR.
- Develop skills within your Chapter, such as public speaking, leadership, and event planning.
- Strengthen the community by fostering relationships between your Chapter and local schools.

Outreach can be a fun and rewarding way to spread awareness about the PR field and show high school students how being involved in an organization like PRSSA can benefit them in the future.

Chapter Benefits

Conducting outreach has benefits not only for the high school students but also for your Chapter. Here's how your members can gain from organizing outreach:

Advocacy and Awareness: By engaging with high school students, you're actively promoting the PR profession and educating others about the importance of public relations.

Skill Development: Outreach allows your Chapter members to practice public speaking, improve their organizational skills, and gain leadership experience. It is excellent preparation for future internships and career opportunities!

Community Engagement: Building relationships with local schools and students strengthens your Chapter's ties to the community, fostering a spirit of mentorship and collaboration.

Participating in high school outreach counts toward the Star Chapter Award—something every Chapter should strive for!

Identifying Target Schools and Classes

Finding the right high school to connect with is key to successful outreach. Here are some tips on where to start:

Criteria for School Selection

Location: Choose schools close to your Chapter, making it easier to maintain relationships.

Relevant Classes: Focus on classes like journalism, yearbook, media studies, or honors English; students interested in communication are more likely to be engaged with your message.

Student Clubs: Schools with active clubs or student media teams may also be interested in hearing from PRSSA, as these students often seek career-oriented opportunities.

Contacting Schools

When contacting schools, it's important to be professional but approachable. Start by drafting a formal proposal outlining your goals, PRSSA, and how the school (and its students) can benefit from participating in your outreach event.

Here's a simple approach:

1. Prepare a proposal highlighting your outreach's goals and the students' benefits.
2. Send a friendly, concise email explaining why you'd like to collaborate with administrators or teachers (such as media advisers, club leaders, or class instructors).

Pro Tip: Follow up! If you don't hear back immediately, a polite follow-up email can go a long way.

Planning Outreach Events

Once you've established contact with a school, it's time to plan the actual event. Remember that different formats work for other schools and students, so be flexible!

Defining Goals and Objectives

First, set clear goals for what you want to accomplish. Do you want to:

- Raise awareness about public relations as a career?
- Recruit future PRSSA members?
- Help students with practical skills like resume writing or branding?

Whatever your goal, ensure it's achievable and aligns with your Chapter's capabilities and the school's needs.

Event Formats

There are several ways to format your outreach event:

In-Person Presentations: Create an interactive presentation with a clear agenda. Incorporate activities that will engage students and keep their attention.

Workshops: Organize workshops on social media management, crisis communication, or PR writing. Encourage students to participate and learn by doing.

Virtual Events: Host a webinar or virtual presentation if meeting in person isn't possible. With the right tools and preparation, these can be just as engaging.

For each format, ensure that your content is engaging and accessible. To connect with students, use videos, case studies, and personal stories.

Engaging High School Students

Getting students excited about public relations can be tricky, so make sure your outreach is interactive and relatable. Here are a few ideas:

Hands-On Activities

Role-playing exercises: Set up a PR scenario where students can brainstorm crisis communication strategies or create a mock press release.

Simulations: Walk students through a PR campaign, from brainstorming ideas to creating a social media strategy. Let them get creative!

Incorporating Technology

High school students love technology, so use it to your advantage:

Use social media: Create a hashtag for the event or encourage students to follow your Chapter's social accounts.

Video and Multimedia: Incorporate videos, infographics, and other multimedia to make your presentation dynamic and engaging.

Building Long-Term Relationships

Outreach doesn't stop after the event is over building long-term connections with students and schools is essential for creating a lasting impact.

Follow-Up and Feedback

After the event, send thank-you emails to the teachers and administrators who helped facilitate your outreach. You can also provide additional resources or invite them to future PRSSA events.

It's also a good idea to collect feedback from both students and teachers to determine what worked and what can be improved next time.

Maintaining Contact

If students express interest in PRSSA or public relations, keep them in the loop by creating an email list or encouraging them to join a social media group. Offer ongoing mentorship by checking in or offering to answer questions they may have about PR, college, or internships.

Examples of Successful Outreach

Here are more detailed examples of how different PRSSA Chapters have successfully conducted high school outreach. These examples highlight a unique approach to engaging students and schools and offer practical takeaways for your Chapter's outreach.

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh PRSSA Chapter took a large-scale approach to high school outreach by hosting a comprehensive event at their campus, explicitly targeting students from nearby schools. Their goal was to introduce high school students to the PR industry and related media fields, sparking an interest in PRSSA before they even entered college.

What they did:

Campus Tour: They organized a full-day event during which students toured the university's communications department and learned about different career paths in public relations and journalism.

Guest Speakers: Professionals in PR and media were invited to speak, giving students first-hand insights into the industry. These speakers shared real-world experiences and tips for entering the profession.

Interactive Workshops: The Chapter held workshops on social media strategy, writing press releases, and crisis communication. Students were encouraged to participate in hands-on exercises that allowed them to experience what PR professionals do daily.

Outcome: The event helped build a pipeline of interested students who would later attend the university and join PRSSA, boosting membership and fostering an early interest in PR careers.

Virginia Tech

At Virginia Tech, the PRSSA Chapter focused on building relationships with local high schools with strong business and communication programs. They strategically targeted schools where students were already inclined to pursue marketing, media, or business careers, making it easier to relate PRSSA's mission to their existing interests.

What they did:

In-Class Presentations: Instead of hosting a separate event, Virginia Tech PRSSA members delivered presentations directly to business and communication classes at local high schools. They tailored the content to each class, focusing on the skills students were already learning, such as branding, content creation, and communication strategies.

Peer-to-Peer Approach: They had current PRSSA members, who were only a few years older than the high school students, lead discussions. This approach made it easier for the students to relate and ask questions without feeling intimidated.

PR Careers Q&A: The Chapter organized informal Q&A sessions after the presentations, during which high schoolers could ask questions about what it's like to be a PR major in college, internships, and how to get started in the industry.

Outcome: By meeting students where they were—directly in their classrooms—Virginia Tech was able to forge strong connections, and several students from these outreach efforts later applied to the university and joined PRSSA.

Kent State University

Kent State's PRSSA Chapter wanted to focus on professional development skills that high school students would need regardless of their eventual career paths. Their outreach events centered around teaching students transferable skills like personal branding and social media management, which are helpful in any profession.

What they did:

Branding and Social Media Workshops: Kent State PRSSA members held workshops at local high schools, teaching students how to create and manage a personal brand on social media. The workshops covered online professionalism, portfolio building, and using LinkedIn for career development.

Interactive Case Studies: To keep students engaged, they used real-world examples and case studies, breaking them into groups to develop social media strategies for fictional brands. Students then presented their strategies and received feedback from PRSSA members.

Resume-Building Sessions: Besides social media, the Chapter offered one-on-one resume reviews, where students could bring their resumes and get tips on improving them for future internships or job applications.

Outcome: The focus on practical skills helped position PRSSA as a valuable resource for students interested in PR and for any high schooler looking to enhance their professional development. Many students stayed connected with PRSSA members via LinkedIn after the workshops.

DePaul University

DePaul University PRSSA Chapter took a more localized approach, collaborating with Benito Juarez Community Academy, a high school with a strong media studies program. Their outreach efforts focused on making PR concepts relatable and applicable to students' everyday lives.

What they did:

District Conference Participation: DePaul PRSSA members were invited to participate in a district-wide high school conference. There, they set up interactive booths that showcased different aspects of public relations. They used engaging activities like social media takeovers, live polling, and mock press releases to keep students interested.

Bilingual Presentations: Recognizing that many students at Benito Juarez were bilingual, DePaul PRSSA adapted their presentations to be in both English and Spanish, ensuring all students could fully engage with the content.

Alumni Involvement: DePaul also brought in former students from both the high school and their PRSSA Chapter to speak about how PRSSA helped shape their college and career experiences. This alum connection helped create a more personal and inspiring touch to the outreach event.

Outcome: By making the event both interactive and culturally accessible, DePaul PRSSA built lasting relationships with Benito Juarez Academy, and several of the students expressed interest in both the university and PRSSA.

California State University, Fullerton

The Cal State Fullerton PRSSA Chapter took advantage of two major campus events to engage with local high schoolers and newly admitted students, ensuring they knew the benefits of joining PRSSA before officially starting their college journey. These events allowed the Chapter to significantly impact future students while fostering early connections with those interested in communications.

What they did:

Participation in Major Campus Events: The Chapter actively participated in both “Fall in Love With Fullerton Day” and “Experience CSUF: Become a Titan Day,” two significant events hosted on campus. These events drew over 13,000 attendees, including local high schoolers and incoming students. The Chapter set up a dedicated PRSSA table where members could engage with students face-to-face.

Promoting PRSSA Membership: The primary goal of the Chapter’s outreach was to inform students about PRSSA’s role in their college experience and the long-term benefits of becoming a member. Chapter representatives spoke about the opportunities for professional development, networking, and gaining hands-on industry experience through PRSSA, emphasizing that students could get involved even before starting their courses.

Leveraging Social Media and Testimonials: Before the events, the Chapter had built a presence among high school students through social media efforts. This familiarity and personal testimonials shared by PRSSA board members further boosted interest and engagement. Meeting the board members in person allowed students to connect the content they’d seen online to the real people behind it.

Outcome: The face-to-face engagement at these events reinforced the Chapter’s social media efforts and helped solidify awareness of PRSSA among incoming students. Many students expressed enthusiasm about joining PRSSA, showing that the Chapter’s strategy of early engagement, both online and in person, was successful in building interest and encouraging future membership. This proactive approach helped create a pipeline of students excited to participate in PRSSA from day one at CSUF.

Ohio State University

Ohio State’s PRSSA Chapter took a more casual and personal approach, organizing small group chats and open houses for high school students to introduce them to PRSSA in a relaxed setting.

What they did:

Casual Chats: Instead of formal presentations, OSU PRSSA members arranged small group discussions with high school students, where they discussed what PRSSA is, what PR entails, and how it can help students in their future careers.

Open Houses: They invited students to visit the university’s School of Communication, where they got to tour the facilities, meet with PRSSA members, and ask questions about college life, PRSSA, and public relations as a major.

Ongoing Mentorship: PRSSA members offered to mentor students interested in pursuing public relations, staying in touch with them throughout their high school years and offering advice on college applications, internships, and more.

Outcome: OSU’s more personalized and intimate approach helped high school students feel comfortable asking questions and engaging with PRSSA members. This laid the foundation for strong relationships between the high schools and the Chapter.

These examples demonstrate the flexibility and creativity different Chapters can bring to their high school outreach efforts. Whether through large-scale events or more personal connections, each Chapter was able to tailor their approach to fit its audience and build lasting connections with future PR professionals.

Resources and Tools

PRSSA National Resources and Sample Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
- Membership Brochure

Email Template For School Outreach

Dear _____ [Teacher/Administrator's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I'm writing on behalf of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Chapter at [Your University]. We are excited to explore opportunities to engage with your students and introduce them to the field of public relations.

Our PRSSA Chapter is eager to collaborate with local high schools like [School Name] to help students gain insight into communications, media, and public relations. Through presentations, hands-on activities, and interactive discussions, we aim to spark interest in this dynamic field and showcase how students can develop skills that will prepare them for successful careers.

Here's how we can bring value to your students:

Public Relations Education

We offer presentations that explain public relations and its role in media and business, covering career paths like media relations, event planning, and social media management.

PRSSA Opportunities

We highlight the benefits of joining PRSSA, including hands-on experience, leadership roles, networking, and portfolio-building, both in high school and college.

Interactive Workshops

We host sessions on crisis communication, branding, and social media, where students can engage with real-world PR scenarios and case studies.

If you're interested in exploring this opportunity, please let us know what dates and times would work best for your students. I'm happy to provide additional details or answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to collaborating with you to inspire the next generation of PR professionals.

Best regards,

[Your Full Name]

[Your University] PRSSA Chapter

PRSSA

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