## Engage Your Intended Audience!

## Strategies to Engage Stakeholders with Your Work

No matter what kind of work you’re doing, one of the top priorities is to share your work with the right audiences. You don’t want findings and recommendations to sit in a file cabinet...no! You want your work to reach decision makers, who can use your work to change practices and inform policy. These stakeholders can come from several different places – for example, schools, districts, state legislatures, and advocacy groups.

There can be several stakeholders – so who’s the right audience? It depends – you might want to target state education staff when promoting research about best practices to close achievement gaps, since the state can test and implement statewide equity initiatives. For a guide on interpreting kindergarten readiness assessment data, however, you might want to target teachers – the ones who actually collect and use data for students in their classrooms. Sometimes you’ll want to target multiple audiences. For example, both state and local staff might use guides on effective professional development, because the report might have implications for both state policy and local choices of PD offerings.

Your audience will drive your engagement plan. Think about how you already communicate with your intended audience, what information is interesting to them, and how they might share information with their colleagues.

Below are some engagement strategies that you may use. Consider these options and think about which strategies could promote the most engagement with your work.

| **Strategy** | **Effort and cost** | **Length** | **Audience Most Likely to Engage** | **How the Strategy Can Be Used** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Twitter | \* | 140 characters | Legislative staff, SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), and relevant community groups | * Promote research publications and tools * Promote events * Host and participate in Twitter chats * Feature videos, blog posts, and other products about research publications and tools * Feature newsletters, and podcasts, media placements, and infographics * Drive traffic to your website |
| Newsletter Story or Blog Post | \*\* | 500-1000 words | SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), and researchers | * Highlight a particular initiative or milestone * Go in-depth about a particular topic by posting a blog series * Showcase both researcher and practitioner perspectives * Promote upcoming events * Promote published research reports and tools * Share resources related to topics of interest |
| Media Outreach | \*\* | Varies | Legislative staff, SEA staff, district and school administrators, and members of the general public | * Increase the reach of a research report or tool * Connect your Midwest work with other relevant work |
| Presentations and Briefings | \*\*\* | 1-2 hours | Legislative staff, SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), researchers, and relevant community groups | * Share research and tools * Tell a personable or relatable story about education research * Increase the reach of a research report or tool * Share findings from a research report * Explain your approach to research or technical assistance * Highlight innovative research methods |
| Infographic | \*\*\*\* | 1-2 pages | SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), and legislative staff | * Tell a story about research findings * Visually represent complex findings * Highlight innovative research methods |
| Public TV Program | \*\*\*\* | 30-minute program and 90-minute screening event | SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), and members of the general public | * Tell a personable or relatable story about education research * Highlight the impact of your work at the state, district, or school levels * Showcase collaboration between researchers and stakeholders/ partnership members |
| Webinar | \*\*\*\* | 1-1.5 hours | SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), and relevant community groups | * Share research and tools on the topic * Make connections to policy and practice * Highlight stakeholder experience with incorporating research * Connect the practitioner audience with researchers and stakeholders |
| Video | \*\*\*\*\* | 2-3 minutes | SEA staff, district and school administrators, school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators), researchers, relevant community groups, and members of the general public | * Introduce your organization, staff, and partners * Highlight the impact of your work at the state, district, or school levels * Highlight a particular initiative or milestone * Showcase both researcher and practitioner perspectives * Share findings from a research report * Explain your approach to research or technical assistance * Highlight innovative research methods |
| In-Person Event | \*\*\*\*\* | Half-day or full-day event | SEA staff, district staff, and school administrators | * Share your research and tools * Connect practitioners from different states/agencies who are working on similar topics * Work with practitioners to create actionable, research-based plans to improve policy or practice |