

Selling words: Promoting your second language program

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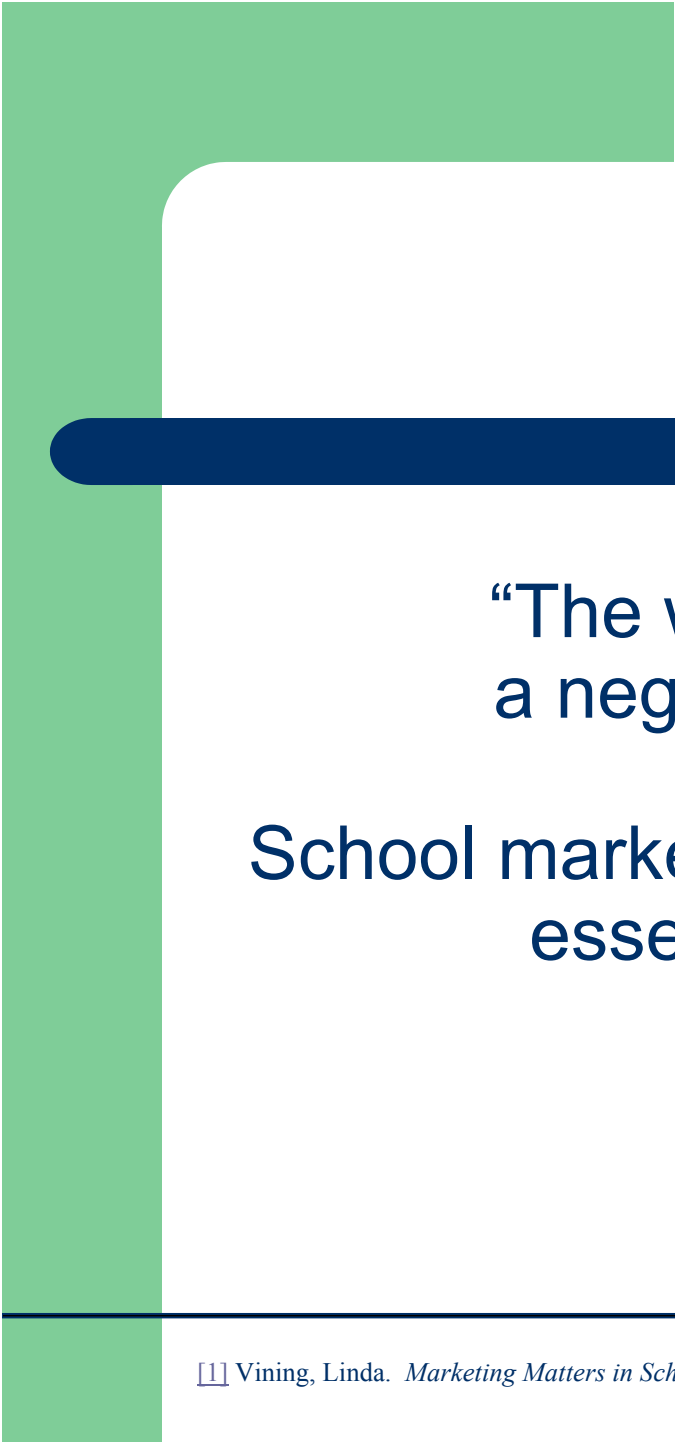
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Objectives

- Overview of school marketing.
- Show you how to present your language program to the public.
- Show you how to bolster the image of your language program and get students interested.
- Build relationships to market better.



“The word ‘marketing’ used to be
a negative concept to educators.
Not anymore...
School marketing has been transformed into an
essential management function.”

- Linda Vining ^[1]

[1] Vining, Linda. *Marketing Matters in Schools*. Carlingford, Australia. Centre for Marketing Schools. 2000, p. 7.

Overview of school marketing

- Ideas for marketing language programs can be used for marketing your school, too.
- School marketing includes such things as:
 - Awareness raising and education
 - Public relations
 - Cultivating a school image
 - Creating a positive feeling about the schools with students, teachers and others

School marketing does not mean...

- Giving up traditional values
- Trading education for big business
- Adding more work
(You already have enough to do.)

The bottom line of school marketing

School marketing means:

- Presenting the best that you are and have to offer
- Letting others know you are proud of your school
- Letting your excitement and pride infect (and ultimately inspire) others.

Presenting your language program to the public

- School leaders need to get the ball rolling
(Don't wait for your superiors or subordinates to do it for you.)
- Be positive
- Be the first to start the dialogue

Make it natural

- Start incorporating the message about language learning into the messages you send out every day:
 - announcements
 - staff meetings
- When you act positive about language learning (in a natural way) then others will do the same. (“Rah, rah!” is not always the most effective.)

Excellent ideas from the Tool Kit

These ideas are great because they don't take much time or money:

- Phone hold messages promoting language learning.
- Use the free newsletter articles provided
- Hold a parent-information meeting

More ideas

These take more resources (time and energy), but could be worth it:

- Use champions – Someone well-known in the community or alumni
- Organize a Language Learning Week
- Organize “key pal” projects at your school

Champions

- Choose someone well-known in the community or alumni
- Establish specific goals (e.g. speak at an information night, write a blurb for your web site, visit classes.)
- Incorporate personal contact with parents and teachers – The more people can connect with the champion, the more they'll be inspired.

Language Learning Week

- Establish a team to work with you (including an energetic coordinator).
- Pick your dates.
- Establish what needs to be done.
- Choose who will do what (include helpers)
- Figure out a timeline

Language Learning Week

A few helpful hints...

- Remember to include food, music and multi-media.
- Creating community – This is opportunity for all the language teachers at the school to work together.
- Make the most of the marketing opportunity – invite local media to the school during that week.

Tips for a successful Language Learning Week

- Make it fun!
 - Games
 - Jokes
 - Cultural do's and taboo's
- Include friendly competitions (spelling bees, poster competitions, etc.)
- Remember the prizes! (Hint: Appoint an “Awards coordinator” to solicit prizes.)

The new pen pals - “Key pals”

Benefits

- Authentic language experience
- First-hand learning
- Students make new friends
- Exposure to the target culture (especially useful in rural areas.)
- Students get excited about it and end up promoting it themselves

Requirements for “key pal” projects

- Coordination by teacher.
- Computer resources.
- Classroom time to explain and monitor.
- Explanations on why this is relevant and useful.
- Student activities incorporating reflection.

Key pal Resources

- **Epals.com**

<http://www.epals.com/eseach/?st=ps&less=1>

- **“Initiate a language exchange project for your students”**

<http://www.tandem-schools.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=59>

- **“An Account of a Pilot Key Pal Project for Korean Children”**

<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Choi-KeyPals/>

Bolster the image of your language program

- Activities that get students involved and excited will improve the stale image of language classes where students had to stand up, conjugate a verb and sit down once it was finished.
- Remember how the metric system was marketed by the federal government? How about recycling awareness? Young people learned first and educated their parents on the topic. We can use the same strategies to market languages in Alberta.

Get students interested

- Language learning week
- Key pal program
- Work with teachers to include “contact assignments”
- Showcase students’ language-related work
- Have a “language student of the week”

Students – the key to marketing

- When students are interested, they get excited about what they're doing.
- When they get excited about languages, they'll market the program for you – without realizing that's what they're doing.
- The more you preach, the more they'll pull away. The more fun it is, the more they'll be attracted to it.

Make languages relevant to your students' lives

They need to see that it is relevant to their lives now (not just a vague reference to the fact that language learning may help them get a job later.)

- Make new friends through key pals (Using technology is a great way to get kids interested.)
- Go for the “Cool factor” - Show them which of their idols speak more than one language. (e.g. J. Lo) or are teaching their children another language (e.g. Catherine Zeta-Jones)

Basics of “relationship marketing”

- Does not mean acting like a “used car sales person.”
- Focuses on the process of marketing or a series of activities to help you market better.
- One way to explain it is:
 - suspect > prospective supporter >
supporter > partner > advocate

Relationship Marketing and the language learning initiative

- People and parties involved:
 - AB Learning
 - School administrators
 - School faculty and staff
 - Parents
 - Students

Where are you in the process?

- Are you skeptical about the language learning initiative? (Suspect)
- Are you unsure, but curious? (Prospective supporter)
- Do you think it's a good idea, but you're not sure you have enough time or interest to contribute much? (Supporter)
- Are you willing to work with others to help it become successful? (Partner)
- Are you leading the way to promote it? (Advocate)

A few final marketing tips

- You can't do it alone.
- You probably won't have any more resources than you have now, so creativity and "people power" are key.
- Remember the "drip effect" of marketing: small efforts over a long period of time go further than one big splash that people are likely to soon forget.

Internet resources

- www.learning.gov.ab/Languages
- www.eatonintl.com
- Free Yahoo! newsgroup on how to market language schools and programs better:
<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/marketinglanguageprograms/>

Stay in touch!

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