

# ITest

## Learning Resource Center

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ITEST LRC  
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### In This Issue

Marketing is an essential part of the work of ITEST projects, and affects recruitment, partnerships, sustainability, etc. To support the efforts of fellow ITEST staff, the **Eyes in the Sky** project presented experiences and ideas about marketing.

**Eyes in the Sky** is a comprehensive professional development program that prepares STEM teachers to use geospatial IT, computer mapping programs, aerial and satellite images, and image analysis software with their students in community-based research projects.

<http://eyesinthesky.terc.edu>

### About ITEST

The Information Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) program was established by the National Science Foundation in direct response to the concern about shortages of IT workers in the United States. The ITEST program funds projects that provide opportunities for both school-age children and teachers to build the skills and knowledge needed to advance their study and to enable them to function and contribute in a technologically rich society. The ITEST National Learning Resource Center at EDC supports, synthesizes, and disseminates the program's learnings to a wide audience.



<http://www.edc.org/itestlrc>

### Marketing Your Program

#### *Tips and Tricks*

This publication documents marketing strategies and insights shared by **LuAnn Dahlman, Principal Investigator of the Eyes in the Sky ITEST project**, during a recent forum for ITEST project staff. Some of the discussion around marketing as it pertains to recruitment and retention has been reserved for the upcoming publication on that topic.



*An opportunity for teachers and their students to observe, investigate, and understand our planet using an eyes-in-the-sky perspective...*

#### **'Know Thyself' - Forging Your Program's Identity:**

- **Draft standard text that describes your program**

Every project should have a 'standard' description for a brochure or a Web page. This boilerplate text should describe your project's goals and activities in as clear a manner as possible. Keep in mind that the description you wrote for your proposal was for a different audience than those you'll communicate with as a funded project. After you write a detailed description, shorten it to produce an executive summary version as well. Make sure you can communicate what's important about your project in a concise way.

You might also come up with a tagline, and a standard format for mentioning your organization and your funder so that these important pieces of information aren't omitted in press coverage and other contexts.

- **Create a logo**

Develop a professional looking logo early in the project, and use it consistently

on all the documents you produce. The logo will boost your professionalism and credibility with readers as well as make your communications recognizable. Consider using a professional graphic designer to come up with a symbol that can represent your project right from the start.

- **Craft your message and materials carefully**

The tone of speech or writing in a document will quickly give people a clear sense if they are in the target audience for that document or not. The readability of text is a big factor that helps folks decide if a piece is for them. Using Microsoft Word's built-in readability statistics is one way to make sure you don't overshoot your audience. Readability scores are based on the average number of syllables per word and average number of words per sentence. To check the readability of text within MS Word, select: Tools > Options > Spelling and Grammar > Grammar/Show Readability Statistics.

A 7th or 8th grade reading level is considered appropriate for general writing. If your writing comes in at the 11th or 12th grade level in these statistics, you can make it easier to understand by rewriting some of the sentences to make them shorter. Make absolutely certain any jargon or acronyms that you use in the text are clearly defined.

- **Tell a story to illustrate what your program is about**

You can come up with a story to help convey the experiences of participants to stakeholders and the wider public. For instance, if you can envision what a successful teacher participant in your project will gain—what skills and attitudes, what teaching practices—that's another compelling way to get the vision out.

### **Know Your Audiences:**

- **Identify your target audiences**

Take a little time to contemplate the potential audi-

ences for your ITEST project activities. They may include: teacher participants, student participants, school administrators, IT-using professionals (i.e., potential guest speakers), education-focused public (i.e., folks who read school district newsletters), STEM teachers who are not program participants who can gain insights from the project, and the general public (i.e., folks who read community newspapers).

- **Customize your message for each target audience**

When you are ready to communicate about your project to someone, consider how you need to customize your standard information. Everyone who hears about your project has a slightly different perspective: each person will be thinking about how it applies (or doesn't) to them. If you're trying to reach undergraduate and graduate students, parents, and middle schoolers, orient your message to each one of these levels. The tone of speech or writing in a brochure is how people gauge early on if they're the audience for that event. For example, if the vocabulary is high level, students figure that it's for teachers. Put the hat on of the people you're speaking to. Test your material by having others read it.

*“Be aware that some of the benefits of ITEST projects are quite technical: some people in your target audience may not recognize the potential of your ‘benefits’ unless they’ve experienced the ‘problem’ that your project is meant to solve.”*

*-LuAnn Dahlman*

We have one brochure that we use for all our audiences (except for middle school students), written for the 6th/7th grade reading level. To customize your material, you can add a section in your standard flyer or add in a 3rd sheet insert, especially ‘For Teachers,’ ‘For Students,’ etc.

- **Communicate the benefits of your program clearly**

Because of the technical nature of ITEST projects, it's possible to lose someone early. The technical things that we do might be hard to understand. When communicating benefits, it's important to explain the problem that you're solving through the work of the project.

Take the example of marketing to a specific segment, such as prospective teacher recruits. If you include photos, then make them representative and show people doing what the participants will actually be doing. Add statements of goals: "Our goal is to..." Encourage your audience to think of the derivative benefit, not just for a single person, but for the community.

### **Make and Take Opportunities for Self-promotion:**

- **Encourage participants to spread the word about your project**

Provide every teacher participant with a customizable presentation file (i.e., PowerPoint) that they can use to share information about your project with other teachers in their school or district. This will allow them to describe what they are doing and the skills their students will learn.

Encourage your participants to see themselves as a local expert on the topic(s) of your project, and communicate with others about it. Ask teachers to consider writing about their experience in your project for local, regional, or national publications.

- **Reach out to your legislators and stakeholders in the community**

Whenever you're doing something important or especially visually interesting, invite legislators and other stakeholders in your project to come out for a photo session. These folks have a need to be seen in positive roles: they may be just waiting for the opportunity you

can offer, and their presence can help you get news about your project published. Anyone who's doing something with the federal government should reach out to their full line of representatives.

- **Write press releases and articles**

Don't let opportunities to invite the press out to see what you're doing pass you by. Get a book on public relations and follow their recipe to write press releases about upcoming events in your project. Distribute them to every media outlet you want to be featured in.

We've written about these events, for example:

- "Project Selects 24 Arizona Teachers to learn Computer Mapping,"
- "68 students attend summer institute," and
- "Math class wins award for Saguaro cactus maps."

Also, use and learn from other models. If you read an article in a local education publication that's related to your work, model right after it. It's a recipe for success. Grab it and customize it to your own needs. Find out the name and number of the education writer for your local or regional newspaper and send them interesting nuggets about your project throughout the year. Be persistent: they might need to hear from you several times before you get onto their radar screens.

If you don't already, you might look into working with your own or perhaps a partner's PR office/staff. Finally, as much as possible, take pictures! Photographs are great to have on hand for marketing and publicity opportunities.

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This IdeaBrief is available at the ITEST LRC website at [http://www.edc.org/itestlrc/Materials/IdeaBriefv3\\_marketing.pdf](http://www.edc.org/itestlrc/Materials/IdeaBriefv3_marketing.pdf).

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