

# Newsflash

## First Impressions: Creating Newsflashes with Impact

### WHY THIS GUIDE?

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It's a wrap! Your research is finally complete, and you're ready to release the findings. Decision makers, stakeholders, and practitioners would benefit from learning about and understanding the results, but what are the best ways to reach them and help them achieve their goals? More importantly, how do you ensure that your findings don't get stuck on a shelf or in a file folder gathering dust? This guide provides tools to help you quickly and effectively inform the field.

### TEN TIPS FOR WRITING NEWSFLASHES

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- 1 Have a target audience.**
- 2 Set your goals.**
- 3 Keep it simple.**
- 4 Keep it short.**
- 5 Write a great headline.**
- 6 Tell a story.**
- 7 Font and formatting matter.**
- 8 Proofread and read out loud.**
- 9 Be timely and useful.**
- 10 Review and refine results.**



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**Posting a report on the web or sending out a press release used to be all you needed to help get the word out. But times have changed.** Today, effective dissemination depends on getting the right message to the right people at the right time in the right form. To break through the clutter, you need the right elements: a compelling story, engaging visuals, and a set of electronic tools, including email, video, and social media. A successful newsflash—an email blast announcing new research findings—incorporates all of these elements. The succinct newsflash format is also perfect for smaller devices like tablets and smart phones, which are becoming increasingly important for delivering information.

### **CUTTING THROUGH THE CLUTTER**

**P**ut yourself in your recipients' shoes. Everyone is flooded with spam and pressed for time. According to UnBounce, an email technology firm, the average employee receives more than 100 emails daily, and deletes many of them instantly. The Radicati Group, a technology market research firm, estimates that the typical user spends 25 days a year processing email. A constant stream of instant messages, texts, and social media posts also barrages users. While not new or groundbreaking, the key takeaway is more important than ever: effective newsflashes must be engaging and relevant. And they must be brief—according to the Poynter Institute's Eyetrack II study, people read more online content when paragraphs are short—think one or two sentences.



## WHAT A NEWSFLASH IS—AND ISN'T

Accuracy, objectivity, and comprehensiveness are core principles of research dissemination, and the Institute of Education Sciences is committed to the highest standards to provide rigorous and relevant evidence for education practice and policy decisions. It's tempting, then, to think that your newsflash must include every detail. While a newsflash should provide a complete story, it doesn't have to provide the *whole* story—that is, every detail and analysis that could be interesting to a reader. Instead, think of it as a “teaser,” similar to a movie preview. The preview tells you what the movie is about and, if done well, convinces you to shell out \$15 and a couple hours of time to watch the whole film.

### Do's & Don'ts

- Do** stay true to the original research.
- Do** tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Do** include a link to the full study.
- Don't** feel compelled to include every detail.
- Don't** forget to write to your target audience.

While a newsflash doesn't have to tell the *whole* story, a good newsflash does have a *complete* story with a beginning, middle, and end! Storytelling is the heart of effective communication and helps cut through informational noise. Targeting your message to your audience is key to writing a good story that gets noticed. The Institute of Education Sciences doesn't segment newsflashes for specific audiences, but you may consider repackaging mailings—and messages—to reach different groups. You can also highlight takeaways for key stakeholders, such as educators or policymakers. The following pages offer examples of the same study presented for distinct audiences. Note the differences in headlines, leads, and main messages. The first example, written for principals and district leaders, focuses on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The second one, written for policymakers, places these concepts in the context of education reform and staffing challenges.

## NEWSFLASH FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

NEWSFLASH

**Studies find teachers from alternative routes are as effective as, or more effective than, teachers from traditional routes**

In the quest to raise academic achievement, how can school leaders hire effective teachers, particularly in core subjects such as math and science?

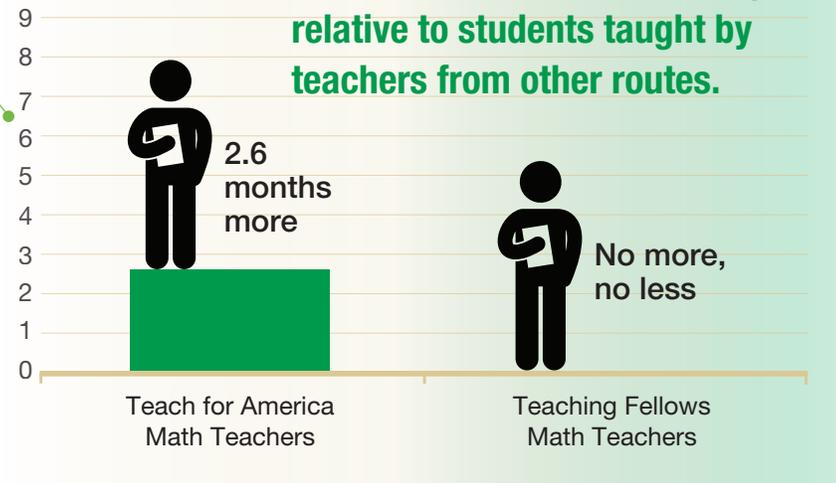
The results of two new large random assignment evaluations suggest that alternative routes to certification may be a pipeline for effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools and subjects. Both studies found that teachers from alternative routes were at least as effective as, or in some cases more effective than, teachers from traditional routes. The studies examined the effectiveness of (1) elementary school teachers from less selective alternative routes, and (2) secondary math teachers from Teach For America and Teaching Fellows, both highly selective alternative routes.

**Elementary School Findings.** Teachers from the less selective alternative routes were neither more nor less effective than teachers trained in traditional routes.

**Secondary School Findings.** Students taught by teachers from alternative routes had test score gains that were higher than or equal to students taught by traditionally trained teachers. Further, teachers trained in highly selective routes had less experience than their counterparts from traditional routes.

For more information, [click here](#)<add hyperlink>.

### Students' additional months of learning, relative to students taught by teachers from other routes.



Teacher Route	Additional Months of Learning
Teach for America Math Teachers	2.6 months more
Teaching Fellows Math Teachers	No more, no less

**...CONNECTING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE**

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Headline

Opening sentence or "lead"

Main message

Findings

Link to full study

Infographic

## NEWSFLASH FOR POLICY LEADERS



NEWSFLASH

### Studies find alternative routes to teacher preparation may help get effective teachers into disadvantaged schools

What policies support the education reform goal of getting effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools?

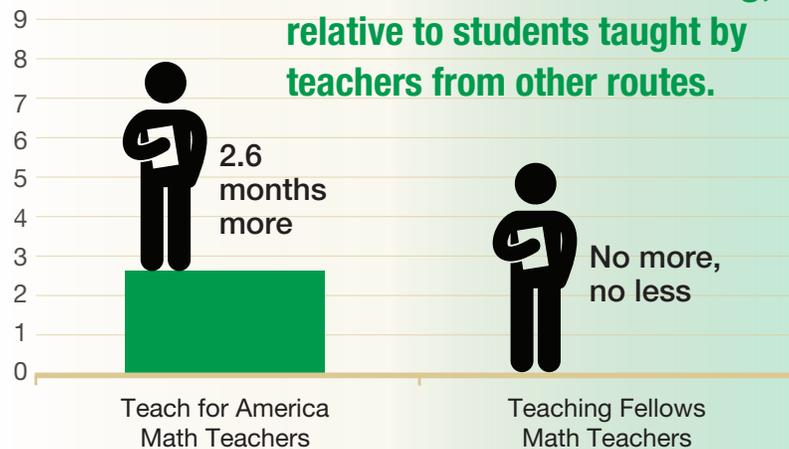
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## TIPS FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE, ENGAGING NEWSFLASH

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**Find your purpose.** Is your newflash trying to entice potential readers? Educate? Convince? Explore?

**Zero in on your audience and goals.** Put yourself in their shoes to figure out what they want to know and how they want to be addressed—then use their language.

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

- **Headline**—A teaser used to search and share the information. Subject lines are headlines too and just as important. Think billboard or bumper sticker—brief, engaging, memorable.
- **Opening sentence**—Known as the “lead,” it’s key to grabbing attention.
- **Main message**—Explain why the findings are of value.
- **Findings**—Zoom in or zoom out. If a close-up is what your audience is interested in, focus on details and technical aspects. Zoom out if the audience is interested in the application or outcome. Either way, be concise and engaging without “dumbing it down”—simple doesn’t mean stupid!
- **Style**—Ditch the jargon! Think use, not utilize; group, not cohort.
- **Content**—Be brief, direct, and to the point. Then stop writing.



**Appearance matters.** Use color, format, and graphics for impact. Infographics and videos grab and hold attention, and present complex ideas in compelling ways.

**Wrapping up.** Include a link to the full study and other documents and materials.

## REACHING OUT

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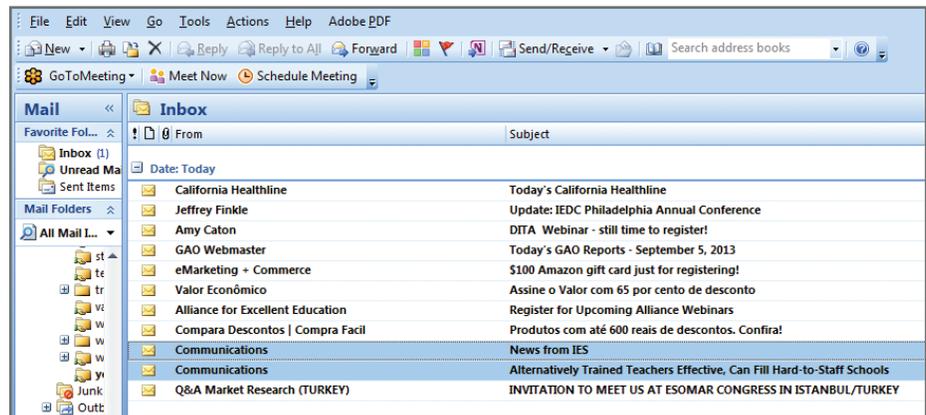
Your newsflash is written . . . but your work is not done. Use multiple distribution channels, including email, social media, listservs, websites, and web-based portals to engage your target audiences. Here are some examples of how to improve your emails and social media posts.

## SAMPLE E-BLAST SUBJECT LINES

**Don't** write a generic subject line.

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**Do** write an interesting headline that prompts users to open the email.



## SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

**Don't** post boring, useless content.

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**Do** use simple, direct sentences, and images if you have them, as they tend to be shared, the goal of social media.

A screenshot of a Facebook post from 'What Works Clearinghouse' shared 7 hours ago. The post text reads: 'Two rigorous studies find that teachers certified via alternative routes from Teach for America are as effective as, or in some cases more effective than, traditionally trained teachers. Download the infographic to learn more.' Below the text is an infographic titled 'Students' additional months of learning, relative to students taught by teachers from other routes.' The infographic shows two bars: 'Teach for America Math Teachers' with a value of 2.6 months more, and 'Teaching Fellows Math Teachers' with a value of 'No more, no less'. The Facebook interface shows 'Like · Comment · Share' and '10 people like this.'

## SAMPLE TWEETS

**Don't** tweet like you're writing a research paper. It's okay to shorten sentences and words.

**Do** use abbreviations, hashtags, Twitter handles, and links.



Remember, timing is important. Get your work noticed by sending newsflashes in the morning and early afternoon when people usually sort through their email. Remember, a newsflash isn't necessarily limited to new content. Consider using a newsflash to repurpose old content to mark events like back-to-school, graduation, or other educational developments in the field.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

**A**fter dissemination, review and assess reach and effectiveness. Downloads and page views, link clickthroughs, Twitter retweets, and Facebook metrics can help fine-tune future efforts.

## REFERENCES

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