Getting Organized

1. Identify a planning team and hold an organizational meeting: Identify a small planning team to organize the effort. Your team might include district staff, principals, parents and community volunteers. Schedule an organizational meeting and discuss the See For Yourself toolkit, its purpose and how everyone can get involved.

2. Appoint a program coordinator: This person will be responsible for coordinating the program and continuing progress throughout the year. Consider asking a principal, teacher, or parent to volunteer.

3. Set goals for the program: How many citizens do you want to bring into the schools this year? What programs and initiatives do you want to highlight? Consider taking current outreach activities and re-branding them as See For Yourself activities. In addition, launch brand-new activities each year to attract community members into schools. Use the See For Yourself ideas below to get started.

4. Develop core talking points: These can be used as the base for an elevator speech to use for presentations to civic and community groups, churches and other organizations within your community.

5. Think about your community and the target groups within it: This will help you focus on the types of activities people in your community may be interested in. For example, if your community has a high number of senior citizens, you will want to tailor events for them specifically. Other target groups might be local business leaders, realtors, local clergy, or others. Be sure to include your local legislators—they make important state and federal policy decisions that impact education.

6. Create materials focusing on your district’s school improvement efforts, learning initiatives, innovative programs and more: Materials could be flyers, videos, slideshows or PowerPoint presentations. Show these when presenting to community groups, as a way to generate interest in learning more about the programs happening in your school. Download the See For Yourself logo to use on these materials: www.promiseiowa.org/see-for-yourself

Now that you’re organized, it’s time to get started! Use the following See For Yourself ideas to start planning your events.

**Bonus Tip!** Ask parents to help with outreach and recruitment. Your local parent organization can set its own goal for bringing non-parents into the school, and can sponsor See For Yourself activities.
See For Yourself Ideas

These can help you get members of your community into your schools. Modify them to best work for your local district.

• Ask students to write personal invitations to citizens, asking them to attend school events.

• Advertise free school events in your local newspaper, on district social media channels, and in school publications, inviting citizens to attend.

• Launch a program for a specific non-parent group, like senior citizens or business leaders, giving them reduced cost admission to school events.

• Schedule an alumni day, inviting alumni to return to school and talk with kids, visit with each other, and see what schools are like today.

• Invite the media to talk with students about their work. Consider holding a media day to launch See for Yourself events.

• Invite elected officials and community leaders for a tour led by students.

• Begin a volunteer reading program. Ask community members who don’t have children in school to volunteer and read books one-on-one with students.

• Ask business leaders to present on their careers to classes related to that specific subject area.

Bonus Tip! Establish a process to collect the names and contact information of citizens who attend See For Yourself activities. Maintain the list and include them in school communications.

Media Tips

Gaining visibility for your efforts is important because it will increase your ability to attract citizens into your school. It also will help promote the message that your schools are reaching out in a new and different way. Here are some simple tips for working with the media.

1. **Designate a program spokesperson:** You will probably have a greater success in generating continuing coverage of your program if you designate a spokesperson to serve as media liaison.

2. **Anticipate a reporter’s questions and interests:** Be ready to provide specific information on newsworthy activities. Reporters may request information on your school’s enrollment, diversity, graduation rates and the number of students who go on to college. This information can be found on the Department of Education’s website. They also will want to know how well your “See for Yourself” activities are working and how many citizens have visited your schools.

3. **Look for special story angles:** Increase your chances for coverage by tying your activity to a current event. Or develop an activity with the community’s oldest graduates, youngest future success stories, most successful graduates, etc.

4. **Be responsive to reporters:** Reporters are almost always on a deadline. Always respond to their telephone calls or questions as soon as possible. When suggesting stories to a reporter, make sure to give reporters enough time to write the story.

5. **Look for visuals:** TV and newspaper photos depend on visuals to tell the story. Anticipate photo possibilities, and suggest them to the reporter.

Bonus Tip! Contact the media in advance of See For Yourself events, and ask for time on radio and TV shows. By inviting them and getting them involved, you increase your chances of coverage.

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Learn more about the See For Yourself toolkit at www.promiseiowa.org/see-for-yourself