

Advertising Design Checklist for Schools

CREATED BY ASHLEY ROBINSON FOR MSM CONFERENCE 2019

CONTENT

- The ad delivers one clear message, illustrating a strategic value proposition.
- School name is clear and searchable.
- There is a clear and simple call to action (such as: Attend an Open House).
- Contact information is sufficient without visually crowding the ad.
- Proofreading for accuracy, grammar, and spelling is complete.

COMPOSITION

- There is a clear hierarchy of information. Certain content stands out to draw the eye in.
- Text is separated by size according to immediate importance.
- Hierarchy is also achieved by thoughtful font and color variation. Choices should fit into a brand identity that reflects your school's values and personality.
- The text and photos are integrated well and text is legible.
- The ad feels uncluttered so it's easy to focus.
- Visual elements are thoughtfully aligned and grouped, and have room to "breathe."

CONTEXT

- The context (a printed publication, a promotional email, social media, etc.) informs design choices: how might the ad blend in, stand out, complement, or clash with the environment?
- The context also informs strategic choices about content (who is the audience of this platform?).
- The size and shape of the graphic match the required or recommended dimensions.

CONFIDENCE

- The ad is intentionally a teaser and doesn't try to tell the whole story. Text is minimal.
- If there are multiple photos, they do not compete for attention. Even if one photo cannot tell the whole story, the designer was selective and let one photo "sing."

Notes:

"A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

Miscellaneous Tips and Tricks

THINGS TO AVOID

Illegible Text

Outlining text and using drop shadows on text can interfere with legibility.

If overlaying text on a photo or solid color, make sure that the color and weight of the font create enough contrast for the text to stand out.

Sloppy Fonts

Comic Sans and Papyrus draw a lot of criticism from designers and are generally avoided in advertising. Comic Sans is also frequently used by day care centers. Even if your school is geared toward preschool children exclusively, avoid these fonts to differentiate your school from generic day care centers and look more professional.

Color Palettes That Read Too Young (if your school extends beyond Kindergarten)

Pastels and primary colors can evoke early childhood. If you are trying to boost enrollment in upper grades, you may want to go in a different direction.

Too Many Borders

It can be helpful to have a thin border around an entire ad to separate it from the rest of a publication or digital environment, but 0.25 pt thickness should be plenty. Be judicious about borders inside the ad itself, and think about other subtle ways to separate information.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

How Competitors Use Color

It's very common for schools to use blues and greens in their branding. Blue is perceived as "trustworthy, dependable, fiscally responsible and secure," and green "connotes health, freshness and serenity" (entrepreneur.com). These are safe choices, and yet for that reason they might also get in the way of standing out.

"Out of the Box" Design

Rectangular boxes are common within ads. Consider breaking that mold with round shapes and curved lines to contain text or photos.

*"There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no, and WOW!
Wow is the one to aim for."*

MILTON GLASER