




Reporting SARC Results, Engaging Your Public




Panel delivered at the CISBA Annual Conference, December 11, 2003.



Steve Rees
Editor and Publisher



Bill Erlendson
Director of Accountability and External Affairs



Don Brann
Superintendent

This is a one part of a panel presentation to the California School Boards Association conference attendees. The panel was held on December 11, 2003, in San Diego, and offered two districts' case studies of successful use of accountability reports for the purpose of public engagement.

Steve Rees, editor and publisher of School Wise Press, delivered the talk you're about to see.

Bill Erlendson of San Jose USD summarized his district's five year effort to improve the public's understanding of their schools.

Supt. Don Brann presented Wiseburn USD's enrollment building efforts. This involved the use of SARCs to recruit new families to district schools.

Return on Investment


Two views of SARC spending

During times when funds are especially tight, business officers direct leadership to spend less. But what would happen if they asked leadership to review the return-on-investment of the district's funds, its people, its physical facilities and equipment? What if all the district's assets had to demonstrate results?

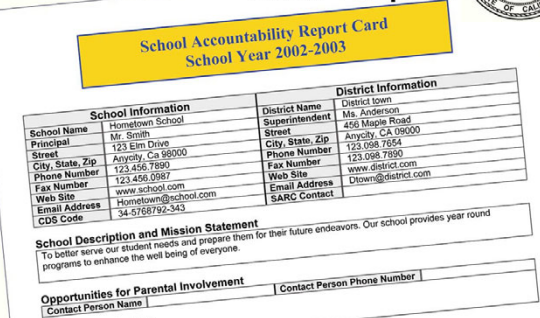
This talk offers a comparison of these two views: minimizing expenses and maximizing returns.

Return on Investment

Minimize Expense



The CDE's SARC Template



School Accountability Report Card
School Year 2002-2003

School Information		District Information	
School Name	Hometown School	District Name	District 1000
Principal	Mr. Smith	Superintendent	Ms. Anderson
Street	123 Elm Drive	Street	456 Maple Road
City, State, Zip	Anycity, Ca 95000	City, State, Zip	Anycity, CA 09000
Phone Number	123.456.7890	Phone Number	123.098.7654
Fax Number	123.456.0987	Fax Number	123.098.7890
Web Site	www.school.com	Web Site	www.district.com
Email Address	hometown@school.com	Email Address	1000@district.com
CDS Code	34-51387192-343	SARC Contact	

School Description and Mission Statement
To better serve our student needs and prepare them for their future endeavors, Our school provides year round programs to enhance the well being of everyone.

Opportunities for Parental Involvement

Contact Person Name	Contact Person Phone Number
Weakly student fun nights	

The minimalist method for many districts' accountability reporting programs is to rely upon the California Dept. of Education's "template" for publishing their accountability reports. For these districts, their goal is just to comply with the laws, and their method is to find the least-cost route to that destination.

Return on Investment
Minimize Expense

The CDE's SARC Template

Assumptions

Schools in district.....**10**

Students:**6,000**

Parents:.....**10,000**

For the purpose of this comparison, let's assume for this example that our hypothetical district has 10 schools, 6,000 students, and 10,000 parents.

Return on Investment
Minimize Expense

CDE SARC Template

Cost

Per school to complete and post to website | **\$400**

Overall cost for 10 schools | **\$4,000**

Assumptions

Schools in district..... **10**

Students: **6,000**

Parents:..... **10,000**

The cost for this district to follow this minimal-expense path to publishing SARCs is \$400 per site. This is the cost, in dollars, for the work this entails. Principals must write a dozen text elements for the report. District staff must compile data. Results must be combined by clerical staff into the CDE's table-heavy format. The reports must then be saved as digital files, and posted on the district's website.

The cost overall to do this for all 10 schools is \$4,000.

Return on Investment
Minimize Expense

CDE SARC Template

Cost

Per school to complete and post to website | **\$400**

Overall cost for 10 schools | **\$4,000**

Assumptions

Schools in district..... **10**

Students: **6,000**

Parents:..... **10,000**

Return

Parents reached | **300**

Cost per parent reached | **\$13.33**

What does the district get in return?

1. Compliance ... but only in part. The district meets the content requirements of California and federal law, but it fails to meet the "understandability" requirement of NCLB and the dissemination requirement, too.
2. Reaching parents ... not many and at high cost. With reports that read like a statistical appendix to a physics textbook, and with distribution occurring only online, we estimate 3 percent of parents will find and read the SARC.

Return on Investment

Maximize Return
Professional Accountability Reports

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

The contrasting example which you'll see next examines the benefits if you maximize return on investment.

Return on Investment: Maximize Return

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

This case study looks at a district that commissions professional reports issued in summary form as well as full-length form. They are created using design standards common in publishing, and written by professional editors.

This district prints its accountability reports, in addition to publishing them online.

Return on Investment
Maximize Return

Professional Accountability Reports

Cost
Per school to create or outsource and print | **\$1,300**
Overall cost for 10 schools | **\$13,000**

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

We'll assume a cost of \$1,300 per school to create these reports. This is about 3 times more expensive than the first case we reviewed. Total cost for this 10 school district would be \$13,000.

Return on Investment
Maximize Return

Professional
Accountability Reports

Cost
Per school to create
or outsource and print **\$1,300**

Overall cost for
10 schools **\$13,000**

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

Return
Parents reached **2,000**

Cost per parent reached **\$6.50**

But the effective number of parents reached is far higher: 20 percent of the 10,000 parents in the district. This is more than 6 times greater than the prior example. This is a conservative estimate, by the way. Many districts among our clients which print and distribute their SARCs enjoy two to three times this 'reach' factor. But in our more conservative example, the cost per parent reached is roughly half the previous example for our cost-minimizing district.

Return on Investment
Maximize Return

Professional
Accountability Reports

**New families who
move into district**

Used SARCs for
decision making **9**

Number of additional
students enrolled **12**

New funds generated
from increased enrollment
at \$5,500 per student **\$66,000**

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

But other benefits ensue. The most important is that these professionally published reports can be used to recruit new families to the district. In this case, we presume a modest 9 families are recruited for whom the annual accountability reports played a significant role in their decision. This results in 12 new students enrolled. At \$5,500 per student, that comes to \$66,000.

Return on Investment
Maximize Return

Professional
Accountability Reports

Voter participation

Additional voters who
approve a parcel tax **400**

Average cost per voter
from campaign plan **\$9**

Cost-savings
attained **\$3,600**

Assumptions
Schools in district..... 10
Students: 6,000
Parents:..... 10,000

But there's more ... the district is holding a parcel tax election in a few months, and the board is budgeting \$9 per vote to campaign. Because their SARCs detail the resources that are scarce, and the ways that two years of budget cuts have hurt classroom teaching, the SARCs are effective in educating voters. The campaign finds that 400 voters cast ballots in favor of the parcel tax in large part because of the SARCs they read. This saves the district \$3,600 in funds they didn't need to spend to win those 400 votes. When a district invests in higher quality SARCs and real distribution, the message between the lines is that the district has nothing to hide, that its facts -- the good, the bad and the ugly -- belong in the hands of its public. This builds bridges of trust with much of the voting public.

Return on Investment
Maximize Return

Professional Accountability Reports

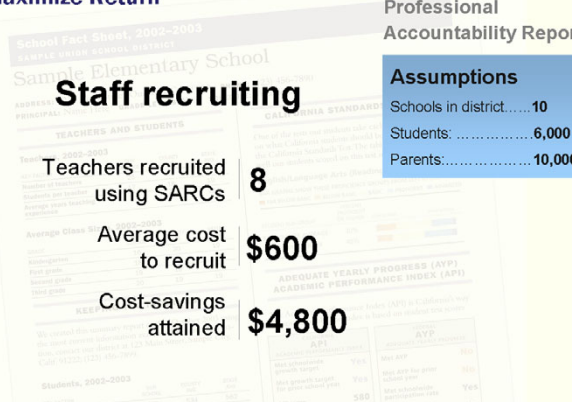
Staff recruiting

Assumptions
Schools in district.....10
Students:.....6,000
Parents:.....10,000

Teachers recruited using SARCs **8**

Average cost to recruit **\$600**

Cost-savings attained **\$4,800**



But that's not all. The district also uses SARCs to recruit new teachers in critical specialties: math and science. The usual cost per teacher to recruit is \$600 in a good year. Eight teachers decide to work in the district, in part, because the SARCs helped persuade them that specific schools would be a great fit for their talents. Teacher recruits are often wary of surprises when they finally get their school of assignment. By making not just district facts, but school specific facts available to teacher recruits on demand, this removed a fear factor from their decision path. Getting to "yes" with new staff requires building bridges of trust, as well.



Return on Investment
Compare Results

CDE SARC Template

Professional Accountability Reports

Minimize Cost
Case #1

Maximize ROI
Case #2





Let's compare the results of these two approaches: minimizing cost and maximizing return.

Return on Investment
Compare Results


	Minimize Cost
	Case #1
Cost to create and publish SARCs	\$4,000
Cost per parent reached	\$13.33
Funds from new enrollment	\$0
Parcel tax votes won (cost-savings)	\$0
Teacher recruiting cost-savings	\$0
	\$0

CDE SARC Template



In Case #1, where the district minimized cost, here's what they spent and gained. They spent \$4,000. They gained 300 parents who they reached at a cost of \$13.33 each. They cleared most (but not all) of their compliance requirements.

Return on Investment		
Compare Results		
	<u>Minimize Cost</u> Case #1	<u>Maximize ROI</u> Case #2
Cost to create and publish SARCs	\$4,000	\$13,000
Cost per parent reached	\$13.33	\$6.50
Funds from new enrollment	\$0	\$66,000
Parcel tax votes won (cost-savings)	\$0	\$3,600
Teacher recruiting (cost-savings)	\$0	\$4,800
	\$0	\$74,400

Professional
Accountability
Reports 

Comparing results tells the story. Case #2's cost of \$13,000 is more than three times that of Case #1. But look at what results.


Reach: More than six times as many parents are reached, at a cost roughly half that of Case #1. New enrollment gains result in \$66,000 new funds. No new enrollments occur from Case #1. Cost-savings of \$3,600 and \$4,800 on the parcel tax vote and teacher recruiting add to Case #2's returns-on-investment. Case #1 produces no such gains. And in Case #2, the district attained full compliance with NCLB and the Education Code. In Case #1, the district didn't reach this goal in full.

Return on Investment		
Compare Results		
	<u>Minimize Cost</u> Case #1	<u>Maximize ROI</u> Case #2
Cost to create and publish SARCs	\$4,000	\$13,000
Cost per parent reached	\$13.33	\$6.50
Funds from new enrollment	\$0	\$66,000
Parcel tax votes won (cost-savings)	\$0	\$3,600
Teacher recruiting cost-savings	\$0	\$4,800
	\$0	\$74,400
Net profit/loss	-\$4,000	\$61,400

The net result shows that minimizing cost (Case #1) shows a net loss of \$4,000: the initial cost offset by no income.

Case #2 shows a net cash gain of \$61,400, the result of \$74,400 of income less the \$13,000 cost of the SARC program.

Return on Investment		
Breakeven Analysis		
		<u>Maximize ROI</u> Case #2
Cost to create and publish SARCs		\$13,000
Funds from new enrollment (2.4 students at \$5,500 ADA)	2.4	\$13,200
	Net profit	\$200



If you are a skeptic, and doubt the estimates of this return-on-investment case, let's ask how many new enrollments alone would be required to pay for the \$13,000 SARC investment.

It would take just **2.4 new enrollments** (three students for 80 percent of the year, for instance) to recoup your investment. This most conservative result is one that any district could attain, as long as district leaders accept the groundrules of this competitive game. Your customers are free to enroll anywhere. **Your cause is best served by giving them reasons to choose your schools over others.**

Summary

- 1. Spending the least on accountability reports will result only in formal compliance and the weakest ROI.**
- 2. Investing more can bring you big cash-positive results in enrollment gains, and cost-savings as well.**
- 3. Professionally published reports are essential to realizing these gains and maximizing return on your investment.**

In brief, there are four lessons to be gleaned from this comparison.

1. Pinching investment in accountability reporting buys you little return on investment. It may be penny-wise, but it is pound-foolish.
2. Investing more in your SARCs can bring back returns many times your cost, and leave your district cash-positive.
3. In order to gain these benefits, you need professional reports that reach your public effectively.

Summary

This talk and all references will be available at:

www.schoolwisepress.com/csba2003

Links to additional references on NCLB and California Education Code legal requirements are available from:

www.schoolwisepress.com/sarc

For further information, you may email Steve Rees at:

stever@schoolwisepress.com

This presentation is one of two you'll find at the URL on the slide.

Even more information about effective accountability reporting -- research, laws, a gallery of reports and more -- are available at the second URL you see on the slide.

If you found this helpful, or want to learn more, please contact: Steve Rees at 415 337-7971 x206, or by writing to stever@schoolwisepress.com

Thank you.

Reporting SARC Results, Engaging Your Public



**SCHOOL
WISE
PRESS**

Steve Rees
Editor and Publisher