

7. Press Advisory & How-To Guide

Get local press for your school and its Family Code Night! Here's how:

The Organizer, Principal or other volunteer can make a few phone calls or send emails to seek local press coverage for your school's Family Code Night. Press love great local education stories of innovative, forward-looking, kid-oriented, school-community family events. Below are talking points for such phone calls, and a draft "pitch" email you can send out about your event. Customize all these materials as needed and desired, and get 'em!

Sections below cover:

1. The Process of Pitching a Story
2. Talking Points (for your press calls)
3. Press Advisory (edit and email to reporters)

1. The Process: How To Pitch Your Story

a. Identify Target News Outlets.

Make a prioritized list of local newspapers, websites, tv and radio stations that serve your community. Just a few is fine to start!

b. Find the Right Person to Talk To at Those You Plan to Contact.

Call the outlet or visit their website to ask "Who covers Education or Community trends for you?" If no "beat" reporter/producer covers these topics, ask to speak with the managing editor or assignment desk, who assign stories of all descriptions to their staff.

Note: The Reach Center at Maine Mathematics & Science Alliance will send a press release to newspapers, TV and radio stations across the state. The press release will invite reporters to visit mmsa.org/familycodenight to see when and where the Family Code Nights are happening. However, we still encourage you to send your own personal appeal to you local news outlets.

c. Pitch the Story.

Call your identified contact(s) at least a week before your Family Code Night. In your calls, keep in mind that the #1 rule of successful media relations: the goal is to help the press cover a great story, in any way you can. Invite them to attend, then help them get pix of Pairs at work, interview willing and interested kids and parents, or talk to your Principal about why K-5 CS ed matters.

2. Talking Points:

For Principal or Organizers' Phone Call to Reporters/Producers

Event Description. "We have a great event coming up at <school name>, and I wanted to see if it might be something you'd like to cover at <name of news outlet>. It's called Family Code



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Night, and it's a totally fun, nationally celebrated family event at which K-5 kids and their parents do their very first hour of computer coding, *together*. Our K-5 kids and their parents will be doing coding puzzles from Code.org, in a room full of a hundred of more kids and parents, all having a great time learning simple coding. It's a great experience for everyone."

Human Interest/Great Visuals. "The event should offer good human interest/education photo/video opportunities. You could get great wide shots of the room full of buzzing Pairs, and close ups of child-parent Pairs at work." [Remember, press need visuals – think of good pictures, video, charts, interviews. See page 3 of this document for tips on getting press-worthy photos and videos.]

A fun story. "Our K-5 kids and parent teams will be tackling self-paced coding puzzles based on Angry Birds and other familiar characters. The room will be buzzing and full of laughter and fun, plus some important learning."

Why This Matters. "Family engagement is vital in computer science education. The White House has recognized the Family Code Night program, which is now being held at schools all over the country. Why? First, parents have a special role for K-5 kids: K-5 kids' self-beliefs are massively influenced by their parents. It's now understood that elementary school is when kids' beliefs begin to harden, whether it's 'I'm not good at math' or 'coding is just for the nerds,' when nothing could be farther from the truth. Second, we increasingly see the crucial role of parents and K-5 CS learning in overcoming the digital divide among girls and lower-income kids: Overcoming gender and economic digital bias requires us to show young kids they can master coding and computer science. Good K-5 CS programs can change the rest of our kids' lives."

3. Draft Press Advisory (edit this, then email your version to reporters)

Press Advisory

Family Code Night: A Special Event at <INSERT name of school>

Event Date & Time: <INSERT date and time>

Contact: <INSERT name, phone, email for Principal or other contact person>

Event Address: <INSERT address, location>

We'd like to invite <INSERT name of media outlet> to join us to attend and cover a ground-breaking computer science education event, *Family Code Night*, at <name of school>. Family Code Night is a free, fun whole-school family event at which children K-5 and their parents do their first hour of coding, *together*. Featured on the [White House website](#) and the front page of the [New York Times](#), this family-engaging evening event is being offered at elementary schools around the country, all in support of the national "Computer Science for All" movement. The event is a delight for parents and kids alike. More information on Family Code Nights in Maine is at mmsa.org/familycodenight.



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Here at <INSERT YOUR SCHOOL>, our Family Code Night will be held <date, time and location>. Please call with any questions. We hope to see you there to cover this important, fun event in local education!

Capturing your own photos and videos at the event

Videos and photos taken on most smart phones are good enough quality to be shown on TV news. Remember to hold your phone sideways (landscape).

If you're taking video, use a tripod if possible.

Taking B Roll: When TV anchors talk about an event, they often show video while they're speaking. We call this type of video "b roll" and it is helpful to take some of this footage in case the news cameras don't show up. It's helpful to get several different shots, including:

- Wide shots, such as a static shot of the whole room or slowly panning around the room.
- Medium shots, such as a group of people at a table.
- Close shots, such as one parent/child pair working on their computers.

Each video should last no more than 30 seconds. Candid shots are preferred.

Doing Interviews: If you decide to interview a parent, student, or volunteer, it's best to use a lapel microphone. This will make their voice clear over any background noise. Put the person off to the side of your shot and have them look at the person holding the camera, not the camera itself. They should talk in sound bytes – short phrases that the news station can take from the video to show on TV. Watch this Family Code Night video for examples of good ways to capture video! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUP6_bUJTn0

One great way to share these visuals is by putting them in a Google Drive folder with your media advisory and sharing them with the press.

