

Gaining *positive* media coverage for your school's STEM project

Deakin STEM Education Conference (online) Tues 19 October 2021

<u>Margaret Paton</u> | Writer | Educator Margaret.paton1@gmail.com https://realcommunications.com.au/ I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which I present this workshop in Blayney, Central West NSW. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the Wiradjuri Nation and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present.

Acknowledgement of Country

Hello &

welcome!

We're workshopping your STEM story ideas

If you haven't done so already, we're using Google Jamboard (details in a few slides)

but plan B, the chat function,

plan C, offline after the workshop (asynchronous)

I'm Margaret Paton (nee Jakovac)



Education & tech writer (freelance)

Former K-12 casual, relief & temp teacher (primary trained). Online business English coach for adults.

 $\overline{\mathbf{v}}$

Current Deakin Uni student in the Certificate of

Education Research program

Backstory

- Started freelancing for Melbourne and Greek newspapers in the late 1980s
- News assistant @ ABC Radio, then The Sunday Age newspaper's first cadet (1990)
- Byline published in more than 100 mastheads in Australia, plus Europe & North America
- An award-winning writer with 35 years' experience
- Freelancing full time for online & print magazines and as an opinion-editorial ghost writer
- Regular contributor to The Australian Educator & The Australian Teacher Magazine/EducationHQ (as Margaret Ryan)
- Niches include
 - Education [K-12 practices, maths teaching, and STEM]
 - Technology [edtech, fintech, govtech, edtech and disruptive startups]
 - The future of work including digital transformation & modern apprenticeships
- Quals: BA (Journalism), Grad Dip Communication Management & Master of Teaching (Primary)

Here's what you'll learn today ...



Mini-Lesson 1: Thinking like a journalist



Mini-Lesson 2: Doing your due diligence



Mini-Lesson 3: Pitching – crafting & targeting



Revision



Questions?

We'll cover these skills

- Writing a story pitch
- Liaising with journalists
- Following up and promoting!

Skilling up

Connect to our Google Jamboard <u>Shortened link:</u> <u>https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV</u>

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

First ...

a question!

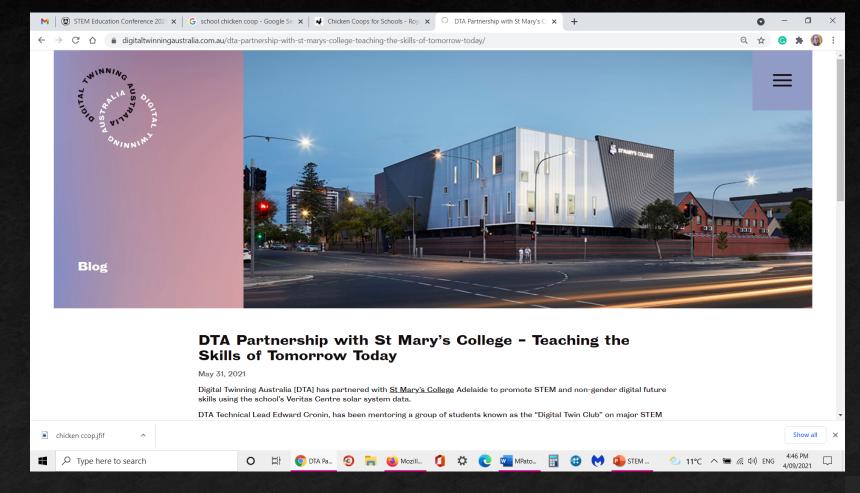
A school chicken coop

 $\overline{\mathbf{V}}$





or a digital twin for a new school building



Which will the media cover?

It's not what you think!

It depends

Here's why the chicken coop story could win:

Had distinctive elements Approval to talk to the media Strong pitch Accessible Great images Didn't need interviewee approval Relationship building

It's about what teachers do all the time ...

We Build Relationships

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC BY-SA</u>



So, why wouldn't the school with a digital twin be covered?

A lot *could* go wrong!

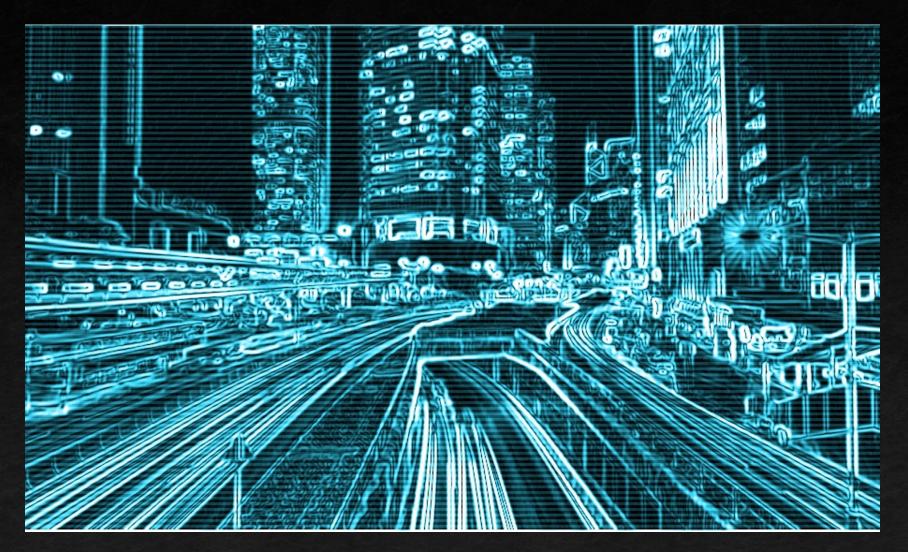
•We'll take a 2-minute pause

 Think what would make a journalist/publication not cover a school's STEM story about digital twinning

Share your thoughts in the chat box



<u>This Photo</u> by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC BY-SA-NC</u>



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC BY-SA-NC</u>

Why a school's digital twinning project might *not* get media coverage ...

- Similar to a recent story
- Getting blood from a stone
- Hurdles to sourcing pix
- School insists on approving story
- Meddling with the story
- Not an exclusive story
- School's grievances

Mini-lesson 1: thinking like a journalist

2

First Skill

 $\mathbf{\nabla}$

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

Mini-lesson 1: thinking like a journalist

Teachers make more than **1,500*** decisions a day ...

Second Skil

So how do journalists compare?



* Teachthought.com

First Skill

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC</u> BY Third Skill Conclusion

Mini-lesson 1: thinking like a journalist

Scouting for story ideas pitching ideas Checking out the competition Meeting deadlines Securing exclusives building trust with sources developing contacts checking facts finding interviewees

researching finding a story hook shaping the lead paragraph drafting & redrafting responding to editors' feedback updating breaking stories pounding out '000s of words a week shrinking profession/pay/resources handling complaints activism & justice

First Skill

Second Skill

Conclusion

For journalists, it comes down to a ONESIE!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC BY-NC-ND</u>

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion



PAGE 28

Third Skill

Second Skill

Mini-lesson 1: Thinking like a journalist ... what makes a good news story?



Something new

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion



unusual

Second Skill

 $\mathbf{\nabla}$

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

It's interesting or significant

▼ Second Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion



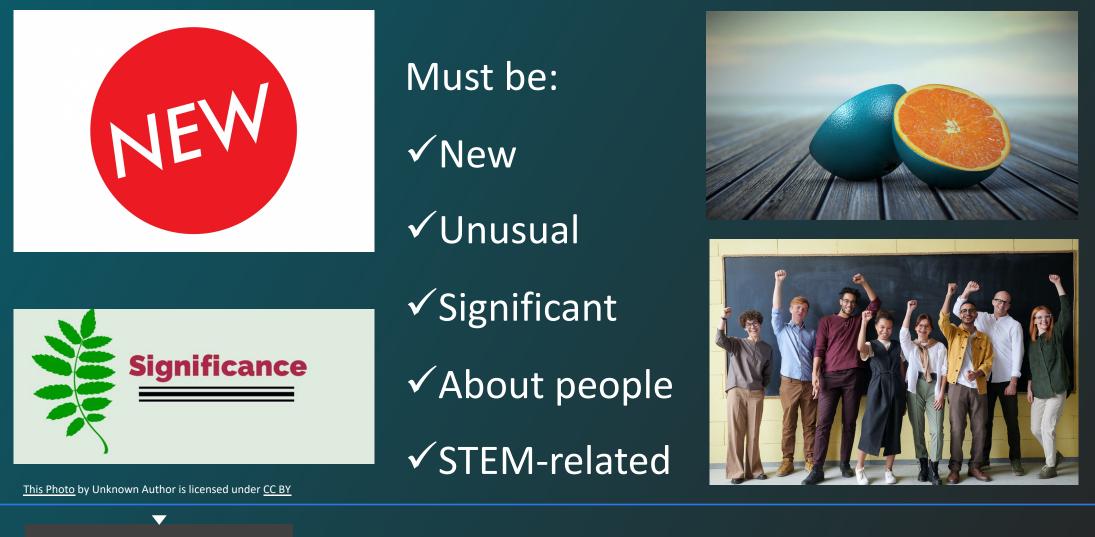
It's about people (doing STEM 'things')

▼ Second Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion



Second Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

- School overcame hurdles
- Results
- Student outcomes
- Changes teaching practice
- School community pride
- Spinoff benefits
- External recognition

Mini-lesson 1: BONUS tips

- Don't overthink it accept rejection & move on
- Where can you get your easy 'wins'?
- Think of pitching as a 'muscle' you need to exercise
- Pitching is great TRANSFERABLE skillNail a short, sharp bio for your school

•Your ideas?

Let's hear them!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under <u>CC BY-SA</u>

We can work on them during this workshop!

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

Connect to our Google Jamboard <u>Shortened link:</u> <u>https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV</u>

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing



Recapping: First Skill: Thinking like a journalist

Why is it newsworthy? Something unusual It's interesting or significant It's about people & STEM

Conclusion

Mini-lesson 2: doing your due diligence

Any thoughts on what you should be doing at this step?

Take a 2-minute break to ponder

Share your thoughts in the chatbox

First Skill

Second Skil

Third Skill

Conclusion

Connect to our Google Jamboard <u>Shortened link:</u> <u>https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV</u>

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

Remember the 1st rule of being a staff member?

Third Skill

PAGE 41

Conclusion

Second Skill



Never give your boss nasty surprises.

Third Skill

 $\overline{}$

Second Skill

Conclusion

Mini-lesson 2: the not so good ...

Oooh, I'm not sure if I should be talking to journalists Let me just check with my principal if I can talk to you Our school will write the story, so just print it verbatim I was sure all of that was OFF THE RECORD I know that's what I said, but it's not what I meant etc This is a REALLY strong story, you should publish it No-one at the school is available to be interviewed

Third Skill

Second Skill

First Skill

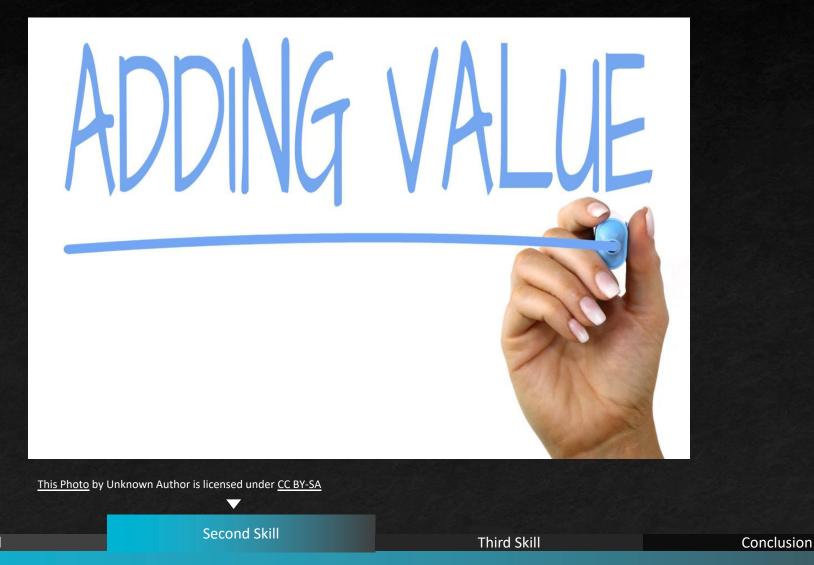
Conclusion

Mini-lesson 2: doing your due diligence

Better...

- Does my school community read/listen to/watch your media organization?
- When's your deadline?
- Would you send me a list of questions before the interview?
- Do you need photographs, if so, of what?

Anything else you'd like to add?



First Skill

Mini-lesson 2: doing your due diligence

In short ...

Second Skill

 $\mathbf{\nabla}$

Third Skill

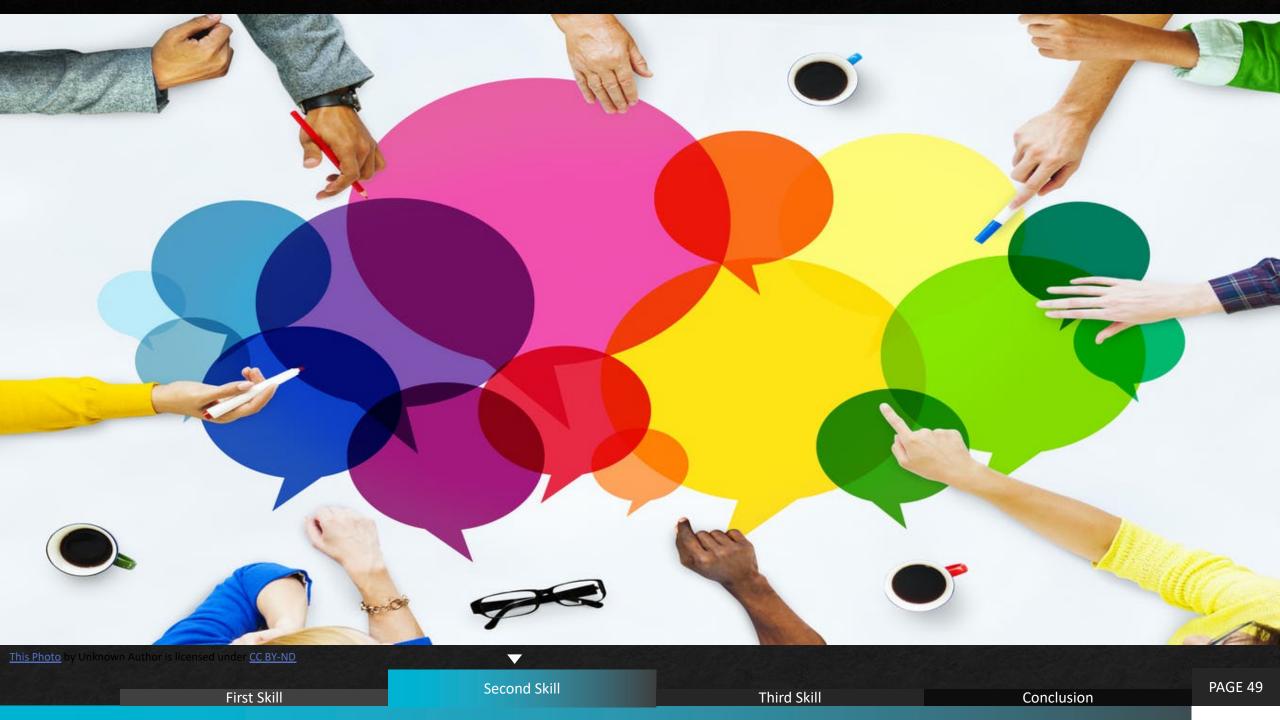
Conclusion



Recapping: Second Skill: due diligence

Secure permission Keep others at your school in the loop. Best not to work alone

Conclusion



What's a story pitch?



First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

2 paragraphs approx

to convince a journalist/editor

to pick up your story idea

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

A media release is a very

long story pitch!

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

Who has time to create that from scratch?



First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

Be time savvy

Create shorter pitches

Even better, develop rapport with target journalists so they know your school's backstory

		Third Skill		PAGE 54
First Skill	Second Skill		Conclusion	17(62.51

Let's reverse engineer ...

_	•	- 1	-	•
- E	Ire	st	5	κı
		36	-	IN I

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

Here's an example of a positive STEM school story

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

EducationHQ NEWS ~

О

MY ACCOUNT \checkmark

Θ

12 PM ● STE… ろ℃ へ ■ 🦟 Ф?) ENG 3:12 PM 5/09/2021

П

Update

 \times

Student drone photography entrepreneurs recognised with international award

By Margaret Ryan Published January 28, 2021

A small rural Victorian school has stormed onto the global stage with an imaginative STEM project.



Myrrhee Primary School Year 3 to 6s' have won a Social Enterprise in Education World Forum 2020 Award with their fully-fiedged drone photography business.

Myrrhee Primary School in north-east Victoria scooped a Social Enterprise in Education World Forum 2020 Award in September. It recognised their achievements towards the United Nations' 'Life on the Land' Sustainable Development Goal.

Myrrhee's students have fostered four social enterprises over the past three years, but it was the Year 3 to 6s' work running a fully-fledged

Stud...



By Margaret Ryan

STAFF

Margaret is a casual primary and high school teacher and freelance writer.

 (\equiv) Related news

Technology / Myrrhee's high-flying social enterprise stars

 β Type here to search

Here's how it started ...

Second Skill

Third Skill

 $\mathbf{\nabla}$

Conclusion

$\leftarrow \rightarrow C \land \square$ mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/myrrhee/QgrcJHsbjprDBSJRfSqxmHrjqRGLlWjfPxb Q \bigstar $\equiv \bigwedge$ Gmail Q myrrhee X \ddagger	k 6	• () 🌒	Update	e :
≡ M Gmail Q myrrhee × 荘	(?	ŝ		
	,		3	(
← Compose ← C 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		>		•	31
L Inbox 50 Australian Teacher Mag journalist request re your school's recent win > Inbox ×	:	¢ I	ē I	e	
★ Starred Margaret Paton <margaret.paton1@gmail.com> Thu, Oct 15, 2020, 12:06 PM Snoozed Image: Starred to myrrhee.ps → Thu to myrrhee.ps →</margaret.paton1@gmail.com>	M 🕁		•	:	0
Important					8
 Chats Please pass this onto your principal - am assuming it would be Executive Principal, Brad Moyle? Sent 					—
 Scheduled 2 I've heard about your school's recent win: 					+
Meet New meeting <u>https://acre.org.au/international-social-enterprise-award-for-tiny-victorian-school/</u>					
Join a meeting I'm a national education writer and sometime casual K-12 teacher based in regional NSW - here's a link to my LinkedIn profile (feel free to connect with me).					
Hangouts The Australian Teacher Magazine has just asked me to reach out to your school to write a 600-word story for the Nov ATM but my deadline is Tuesday.					
It would take about 20mins for a phone interview and I'm happy to email questions beforehand. My process is also to send you my draft story for factual and quote correction, b it by Tuesday, please note.	out i w	vould	l nee	d	
If it's a 'yes', please make an interview time with me this week using the green lettering just after my email signature panel.					
If you'd like me to email you questions/thinking points before hand, I can do that. Thanks for considering my request.					
No recent chats Rgds Start a new one M					
Margaret Paton M Teach, Grad Dip Comm Mgmt, BA Journalism Education Writer Business Copywriter Educator, @ Communications: Keeping It Real 61 417 423 812 margaret.paton1@gmail.com http://realcommunications.com.au/					>
▲ ● ▲ Based in Blayney, Central West NSW Australia ■ ✓ Type here to search O ↓ ● Aust ④ ↓ ● ▲ ● ● ▲)) EN/	IG	3:17	PM	

So, I pitched them, but sometimes a school pitches me

 $\bullet \bullet \bullet$

Second Skill

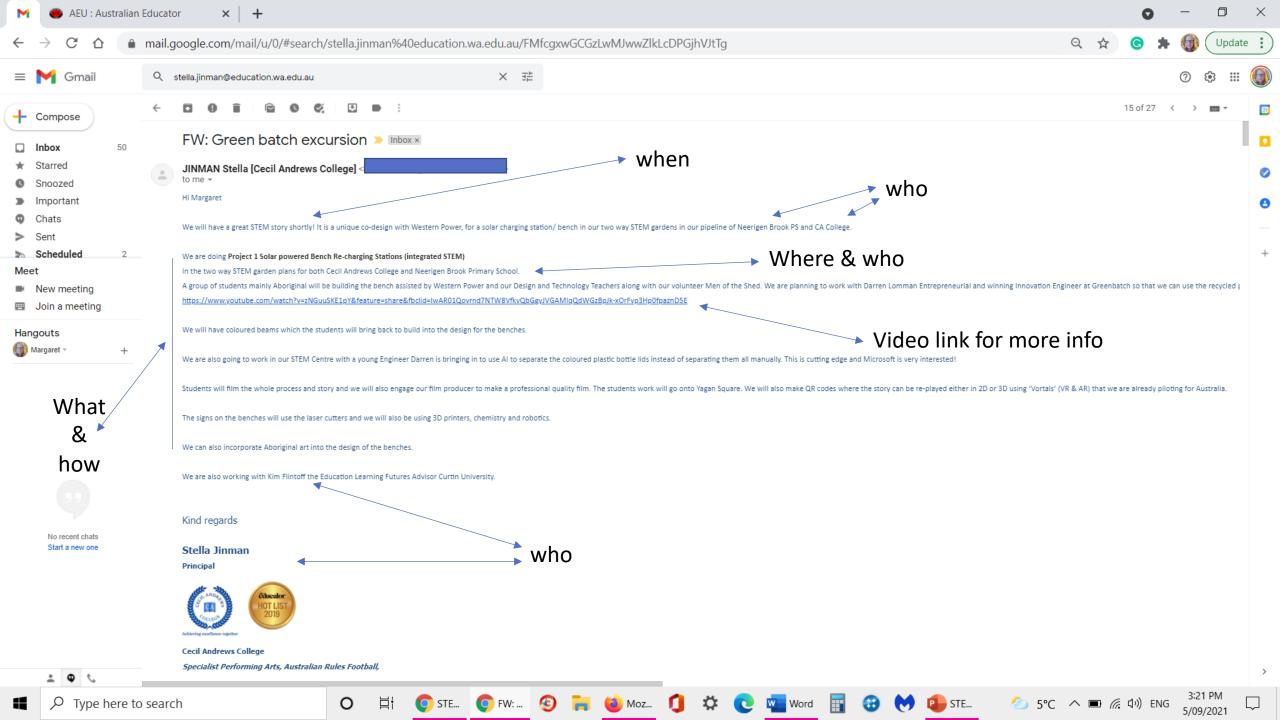
Third Skill

PAGE 60

Conclusion

First Skill

M 🕘 AEU : Australian E	Educator \times + \bigcirc - \Box \times
\leftrightarrow \rightarrow C \triangle	mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/stella.jinman%40education.wa.edu.au/FMfcgxwGCGzLwMJwwZlkLcDPGjhVJtTg 🔍 🗘 🚱 🛊 🚳 Update 🔅
= M Gmail	Q stella.jinman@education.wa.edu.au X 主
+ Compose	 ← □ □ □ □ □<!--</td-->
□ Inbox 50	FW: Green batch excursion > Inbox ×
★ Starred	JINMAN Stella [Cecil Andrews College] <
SnoozedImportant	Hi Margaret
ChatsSent	We will have a great STEM story shortly! It is a unique co-design with Western Power, for a solar charging station/ bench in our two way STEM gardens in our pipeline of Neerigen Brook PS and CA College.
Scheduled 2 Meet	We are doing Project 1 Solar powered Bench Re-charging Stations (integrated STEM) In the two way STEM garden plans for both Cecil Andrews College and Neerigen Brook Primary School.
New meeting	A group of students mainly Aboriginal will be building the bench assisted by Western Power and our Design and Technology Teachers along with our volunteer Men of the Shed. We are planning to work with Darren Lomman Entrepreneurial and winning Innovation Engineer at Greenbatch so that we can use the recycled s
📟 Join a meeting	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNGuuSKE1pY&feature=share&fbclid=lwAR01Qovrnd7NTW8VfkvQbGgyJVGAMIqQdWGzBpJk-xOrFvp3Hp0fpaznD5E
Hangouts	We will have coloured beams which the students will bring back to build into the design for the benches.
<u> </u>	We are also going to work in our STEM Centre with a young Engineer Darren is bringing in to use AI to separate the coloured plastic bottle lids instead of separating them all manually. This is cutting edge and Microsoft is very interested!
	Students will film the whole process and story and we will also engage our film producer to make a professional quality film. The students work will go onto Yagan Square. We will also make QR codes where the story can be re-played either in 2D or 3D using 'Vortals' (VR & AR) that we are already piloting for Australia.
	The signs on the benches will use the laser cutters and we will also be using 3D printers, chemistry and robotics.
	We can also incorporate Aboriginal art into the design of the benches.
	We are also working with Kim Flintoff the Education Learning Futures Advisor Curtin University.
	Kind regards
No recent chats Start a new one	Stella Jinman
	Principal
	Cibecator HOT LIST 2019
	Cecil Andrews College
± ♥ %	Specialist Performing Arts, Australian Rules Football,
Type here to	search O 🛱 O STE O FW: 🙆 🐂 🎃 Moz 🚺 🌣 💽 🚾 Word 🔢 🤀 😽 💁 STE 🖉 5°C ^ 📼 🌾 Ф)) ENG 3:21 PM ///////////////////////////////////



Then, I pitched the editor of

EducationHQ

and 3 months later ...

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

 \mathcal{P} Type here to search



EducationHQ NEWS ~

О

STE

News > Technology > Perth school's innovative STEAM project

Perth school's innovative STEAM project

By Margaret Ryan Published March 31, 2020

Cecil Andrews College in Perth didn't come up with the idea of creating a solar bench to recharge smartphones and connect to WiFi, but they sure are transforming this innovation on many levels.



Solar benches at Cecil Andrews College will incorporate Aboriginal students' art designs using 3D printers, DigiTech and robotics.

For starters, they'll use recycled plastic that their students are sourcing, extruding and moulding themselves. Plus, they're integrating technology, science, maths, creative arts, business and construction curricula into this project. And not only will about 100 of the schools'



П

Q

● STE... ^{23:49 PM} 5/09/2021

MY ACCOUNT \checkmark

Update

X

By Margaret Ryan STAFF

Margaret is a casual primary and high school teacher and freelance writer.

Word

The nuts and bolts of a pitch

Keep it short

Max 3 key messages

Spokesperson

Images (HIGH res - at least 1Meg!)Email not telephone

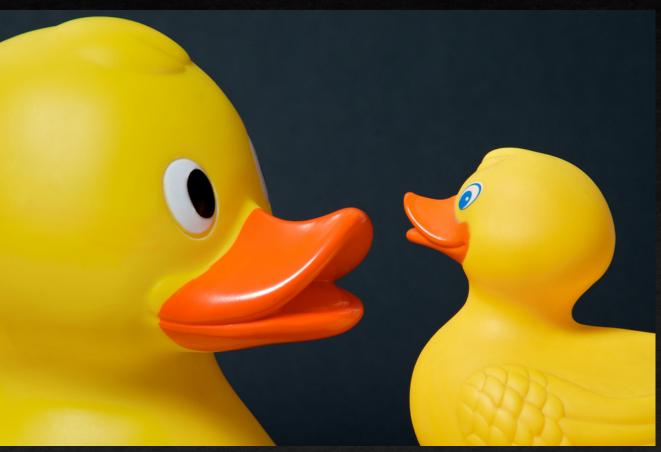
The nuts and bolts of a pitch – part 2

Answer these questions: Who? What? Why? Where? How? When?



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

And the big one!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND

(pondering time)

Does it answer this question well:

Let's unpack that ...

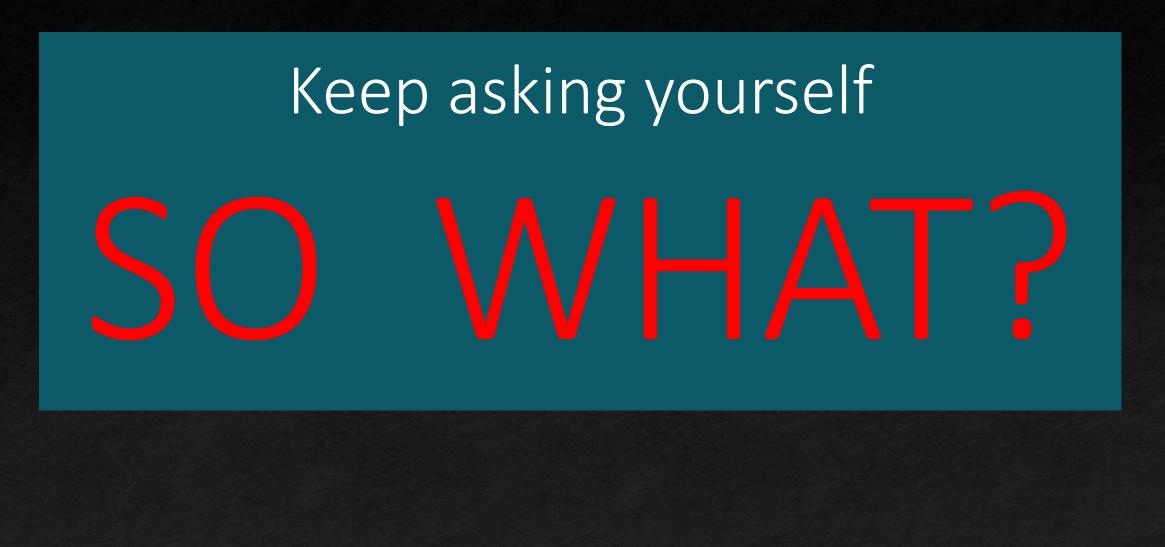
Remember those points from Mini-Lesson 1: To be newsworthy, your story must be:

- ✓New
- ✓ Unusual
- ✓ Significant
- ✓ About people
- ✓ STEM-related

But don't stop there

Really think, WHAT makes your STEM story interesting:

- You won external funding for it.
- Did the STEM project surprise you? How? Quantify
- Why's the project a BIG deal for your school?
- Were you expecting something different? What?
- Will it/did it transform your school? How?
- Would other schools be envious? Why?
- What amazing roles did teachers have?
- Students' roles? Impact on their learning?



And add your

'call to action'

Call to actions:

Could this be a story for you? Get in touch for more information Please ring to organise an interview What else would you like to know about the project? Let me know if you'd like to chat about it

Any questions?

Connect to our Google Jamboard <u>Shortened link:</u> <u>https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV</u>

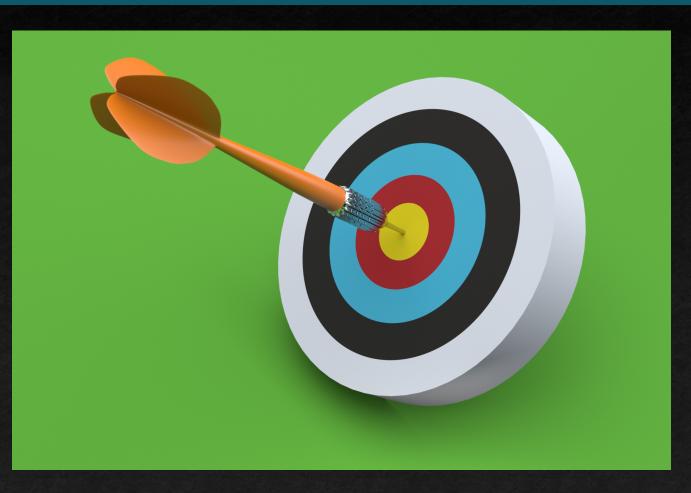
Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

So how do you get from 'pitch' to ...



... bullseye?



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-ND

So, before you get your pitch out there ...

- What does success look like for you when this news item is published/aired?
- Who do you want to read/know about your school's STEM news?
- Key messages for your audience?
- What publications/sites/media channels do you value?
- How many degrees of separation?
- Is the timing of the publication/airing important for you?

Each media organisation is unique

- Different political leanings/story genres/geographical area(s) covered
- Levels of resourcing
- Journalists' level of experience/enthusiasm
- Some may ASK you to advertise first before they cover your story (!)

Your options to target

- Your local newspaper
- A metropolitan newspaper
- A regional newspaper
- Local radio stations
- Regional TV station
- News website
- National publication
- Education editor/journalist
- Freelance education writer
- State TV station

- National TV station
- Current affairs show
- ABC Radio science show
- An education 'influencer'
- Your state's education dpt media team
- Ethnic newspapers/site
- International website
- Etc.

Question:

Should you know which media organisation

you're targeting

before you start writing your pitch?

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

 $\mathbf{\nabla}$

Conclusion

PAGE 82

Provocation:

Find your story first, shape it, then consider the 'best fit' media organisation. Otherwise you're contorting your story to fit the media organisation.

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

PAGE 83

What do you think?

How would you work out which media organisation to target with your STEM story? And WHY?

First Skill

Second Skill

Third Skill

Conclusion

PAGE 84

Connect to our Google Jamboard <u>Shortened link:</u> <u>https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV</u>

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

Once you've sent your pitch, then what?

Follow up!

If you hear nothing:

Re-send the email in 3-5 business days

Ring the journalist within a week

If they respond:

Ask them what they need:

An interviewee? Who? When?

Photographs? Of what? When? Preferred format?

• When is their deadline?

And, once it's all done and dusted

Your story has been published/aired?

Email them to thank them (unless they botched it!
 Then you'd send a diplomatic complaint letter).

Ask how you can work together more smoothly in future – what would they prefer?



Recapping: Third Skill: pitching

Keep it short Email is best (rather than phoning) Answer these questions: Who? What? Why? Where? How? When? Call to action & follow up

Third Skill

Now, let's workshop your STEM stories!

Connect to our Google Jamboard

Shortened link:

https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

Revision



First Skill: Thinking like a journalist

Why is it newsworthy? Something unusual It's interesting or significant It's about people & **STEM**

Conclusion



Second Skill: due diligence

Secure permission
Keep others at your school in the loop.
Don't work alone

Conclusion

PAGE 94

Third Skill



Third Skill: pitching

Keep it short Email is best (rather than phoning) Answer these questions: Who? What? Why? Where? How? When? Call to action & follow up

Conclusion

Thank you for checking out this workshop!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Any questions?

And I'll keep an eye on this, too!

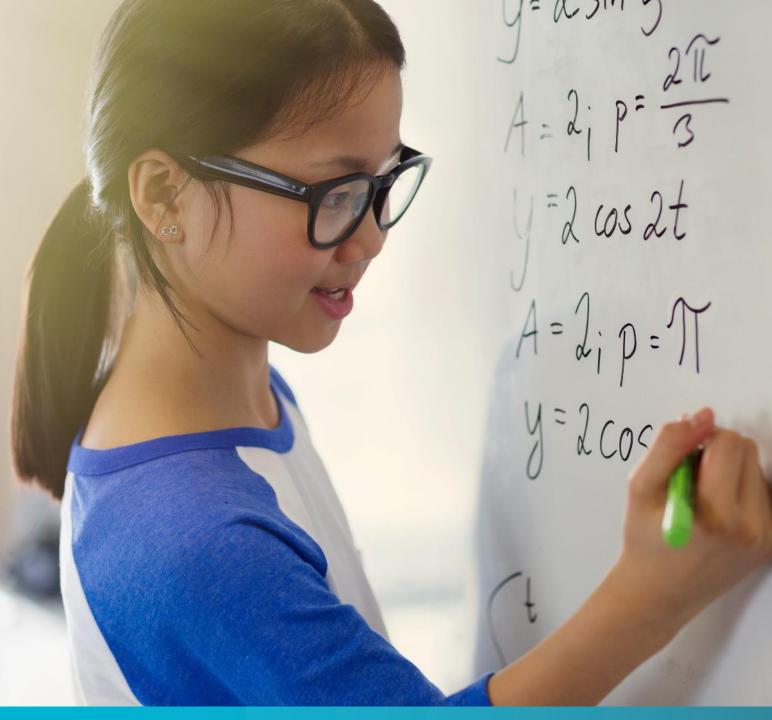
Connect to our Google Jamboard

Shortened link:

https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGkhliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing



Gaining *positive* media coverage for your school's STEM project

Deakin STEM Education Conference (online) Tues 19 October 2021

<u>Margaret Paton</u> | Writer | Educator Margaret.paton1@gmail.com https://realcommunications.com.au/

Gaining *positive* media coverage for your school's STEM project

Summary workshop notes from the Deakin STEM ED Conference (online) 19/10/21

Presenter: Margaret Paton | Writer | Educator | <u>margaret.paton1@gmail.com</u> | 0417423 812 (Also a student in Deakin University's Graduate Certificate in Education Research program)

Connect to our Google Jamboard

Shortened link:

https://bit.ly/3z3zfPV

Actual link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vZGk-hliltrZp6i8HJsAxHI5hhtBZE5nnKVy88er9LE/edit?usp=sharing

Abstract:

A school's chicken coop and another school's solar-powered recycled plastic benches with inbuilt phonerecharging stations - which will see the light of day as a STEM story published on a news site, specialist education magazine, or newspaper? It's all about crafting a story-idea pitch, how, when, and where you send it, and the relationships you build with your target media.

If you're not having much luck so far or are keen to get more hits with your 'school STEM news', join this workshop with an award-winning Australian education writer - who's also been a teacher. BYO story ideas for us to work on together. Please note, the focus isn't social media, but a lot of the tips I'll share will be applicable there, too.

In pairs/small groups, we will 'triage' your embryonic story-pitches, then regroup to discuss. Group members then present their verbal pitches, attendees can quiz them (as if they're journalists) with the guiding question of 'so what?'. The presenter can guide attendees, if needed, offering prompts/nudges to sharpen pitches and develop a stronger story.

To vary the group presentation, two attendees from different groups could do a skill play with one presenting their pitch and the other quizzing them, journalistic-style. If workshop attendees need more modelling, we can go through one of the pitches together on the whiteboard so they can see it develop in real-time on the screen. Open question time about the presentation and the activity.

Debrief: The presenter asks attendees to share what they saw as the main points, the 'ah ha' moments from the workshop, what they might do differently, and if they have any holes in their understanding/confidence levels to surge ahead.

Intro: Working out which could be the hotter STEM project news angle:

A story about a chicken coop could win:

- Had distinctive elements
- Approval to talk to the media
- Strong pitch
- Accessible

- Great images
- Didn't need interviewee approval
- Relationship building

Meanwhile, a STEM story about a school's digital twin might not because:

- Similar to a recent story
- Getting blood from a stone
- Hurdles to sourcing pix
- School's grievances

- School insists on approving story
- Meddling with the story
- Not an exclusive story

Mini-lesson 1: Thinking like a journalist

Teachers make more than 1,500 decisions a day, so how do journalists compare?

- Scouting for story ideas
- pitching ideas
- Checking out the competition
- Meeting deadlines
- Securing exclusives
- building trust with sources
- developing contacts
- checking facts
- finding interviewees
- researching

For journalists, it comes down to a onesie: NEWS!

What makes a good news story? It must be:

- ✓ New
- ✓ Unusual
- ✓ Significant

What else makes a 'good' STEM story?

- School overcame hurdles
- Results
- Student outcomes
- Changes teaching practice

Bonus tips:

- Don't overthink it accept rejection & move on
- Where can you get your easy 'wins'?
- Think of pitching as a 'muscle' you need to exercise
- Pitching is great TRANSFERABLE skill
- Nail a short, sharp bio for your school

- finding a story hook
- shaping the lead paragraph
- drafting & redrafting
- responding to editors' feedback updating breaking stories
- pounding out '000s of words a week shrinking profession/pay/resources
- handling complaints
- activism & justice

- ✓ About people
- ✓ STEM-related (for the purposes of this workshop).
- School community pride
- Spinoff benefits
- External recognition

Mini-lesson 2: Doing your due diligence

The first rule of being a staff member: never give your boss nasty surprises

The not-so good (I've heard as a journalist):

- Oooh, I'm not sure if I should be talking to journalists
- Let me just check with my principal if I can talk to you
- Our school will write the story, so just print it verbatim
- I was sure all of that was OFF THE RECORD
- I know that's what I said, but it's not what I meant etc
- This is a REALLY strong story, you should publish it
- No-one at the school is available to be interviewed

This is better!

- Does my school community read/listen to/watch your media organization?
- When's your deadline?
- Would you send me a list of questions before the interview?
- Do you need photographs, if so, of what?

So, remember to:

- Secure permission
- Keep others at your school in the loop.
- Best not to work alone

Mini-lesson 3: Crafting your story pitch

A pitch is usually a par or two to convince a journalist/editor to pick up your story idea. A press release is a very long story pitch.

Key points for crafting pitches:

- Be time savvy
- Create shorter pitches (max 3 key messages)
- Have a spokesperson approved and ready to speak to the journalist
- Think about high-resolution images you could send (at least 1 meg)
- Email, don't phone the journalist
- Include a 'call to action' (see below)
- Even better, develop rapport with target journalists, so they know your school's backstory

...AND ensure your pitch answers: Who, what, why, where, when and how?

...plus

So, what? (Why is your story so important/distinctive/unusual/gripping?)

Really think, WHAT makes your STEM story interesting:

- You won external funding for it.
- Did the STEM project surprise you? How? Quantify
- Why's the project a BIG deal for your school?
- Were you expecting something different? What?
- Will it/did it transform your school? How?
- Would other schools be envious? Why?
- What amazing roles did teachers have?
- Students' roles? Impact on their learning?

Suggested call to actions:

- Could this be a story for you?
- Get in touch for more information
- Please ring to organise an interview
- What else would you like to know about the project
- Let me know if you'd like to chat about it

How to get from pitch to bullseye?

Before you get your pitch out there ...

- What does success look like for you when this news item is published/aired?
- Who do you want to read/know about your school's STEM news?
- Key messages for your audience?
- What publications/sites/media channels do you value?
- How many degrees of separation?
- Is the timing of the publication/airing important for you?

Each media organisation is unique:

- Different political leanings/story genres/geographical area(s) covered
- Levels of resourcing
- Journalists' level of experience/enthusiasm
- Some may ASK you to advertise first before they cover your story (!)

Who to target?

- Your local newspaper
- A metropolitan newspaper
- A regional newspaper
- Local radio stations
- Regional TV station
- News website
- National publication
- Education editor/journalist
- Freelance education writer
- State TV station

- National TV station
- Current affairs show
- ABC Radio science show
- An education 'influencer'
- Your state's education dpt media team
- Ethnic newspapers/site
- International website
- Etc.

Consider:

Should you know which media organisation you're targeting before you start writing your pitch?

Suggestion: Find your story first, shape it, then consider the 'best fit' media organisation. Otherwise you're contorting your story to fit the media organisation.

Once you've sent your pitch – FOLLOW UP!

If you hear nothing:

- Re-send the email in 3-5 business days
- Ring the journalist within a week

Ask them what they need:

- An interviewee? Who? When?
- Photographs? Of what? When? Preferred format?
- When is their deadline?

Your story has been published/aired?

- Email them to thank them (unless they botched it! Then you'd send a diplomatic complaint letter).
- Ask how you can work together more smoothly in future what would they prefer?

Good luck!

Feel free to get in touch with me after the workshop if you'd like to bounce your school's STEM story off me: <u>Margaret.paton1@gmail.com</u> or 0417 423 812 (CW NSW based)