

BUILDING A COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM IN YOUR DISTRICT

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COMMUNICATION



4 REASONS WHY A SCHOOL PR PROGRAM IS CRITICAL



- 1. The public has a right to know about and be engaged in their schools.**
- 2. Solid two-way communication builds trust, confidence and support for doing the best for all children in our schools.**
- 3. Schools have a public responsibility to tell parents and taxpayers how schools are spending their money**
- 4. Schools should seek public insight to help create the high quality educational environment they want for students**



3 STEPS TO GETTING A COMMUNICATION PROGRAM STARTED



1. **Form a PR or communications *committee* composed of board members, superintendent and staff.**
2. **Conduct a *communication audit* to assess the needs of your district**
3. **Commit enough *resources*: hire staff, train existing staff, or contract services.**



First Things First...

*A good plan begins
with research*

WHO is your Audience?

WHERE do they look for information?

WHAT are their concerns?

HOW do we communicate to them?





WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

Your Stakeholders

INTERNAL

Staff and administration

Teachers

Students

In-school volunteers

School Board, Task Force &
Committees

Other? _____

EXTERNAL

Parents & some volunteers

Media

Taxpayers & community

Business community

Donors/contributors to foundation

Other? _____



YOUR A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E

- **Analysis**
- **Understanding**
- **Demographics**
- **Interest**
- **Environment**
- **Needs**
- **Customization**
- **Expectations**





WHERE DO PEOPLE GO FOR INFORMATION?

Demographics correlate with news consumption:

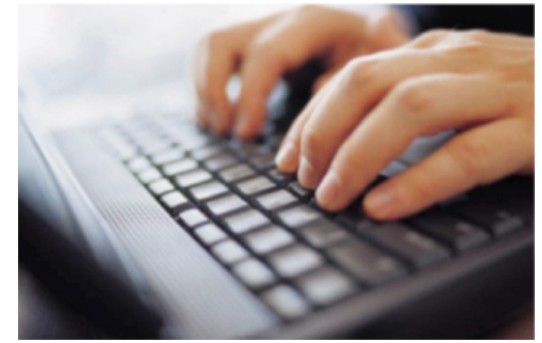
Where people get local news weekly

SOURCE	TYPICAL DEMOGRAPHIC
74% Local TV news	Primarily women, minority, ages 40+ and households earning less than \$50K
55% Word of Mouth	Most adults (ages 18-29 most likely to report, includes social networking)
51% Radio	Typically adults aged 30-65
50% Local Newspaper	Print newspaper - suburban adults age 40+. Newspaper website - younger, higher income adults.
47% Internet	Primarily under age 40, white, and have some college education.



WHICH MEANS...

To build a strong, proactive communications program, you need to:



1. Have a solid online presence with accurate, relevant information
2. Maintain good media relations by feeding press releases to print, TV and online news outlets
3. Distribute fresh, accurate information for staff, parents and teachers so they can be your district's word of mouth ambassadors



WHAT'S YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY?

4 main types of content:

1. Educational content
2. Informative content
3. Entertaining content
4. Inspiring content





WHAT TO TALK ABOUT?

Top concerns about schools?? **ASK!**

Use online surveys, listening sessions, polls, 1-1 meetings to identify concerns



Stakeholders	Primary Concerns
Taxpayers & community?	Fiscal responsibility Innovation and competitiveness Other _____
Parents?	Safety Curriculum Testing Other _____
Staff and teachers?	Relationship with board and administration Professional development Keeping up with technology Other _____

THEN, DEPLOY

- **Cast a wide net**

Your website is the central information hub-drive people there for info.

Then include newspapers, email, social media, take-home folders, community meetings, and other tools.

PR and Marketing Toolkit

Online Tools





USE CONTENT EFFICIENTLY

Get the most mileage from your content

Re-purpose content for each stakeholder group and for each communication channel

***For example:* re-use superintendent newspaper column or press release for a few Facebook posts, a link on Twitter, or for a parent e-newsletter article.**





SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook: create engagement with useful, interesting information

Twitter: “trend” fast-moving news in your district in short bursts

Email: Key tool to build credibility with parents, staff and community supporters

Text: Quickly connect with students and parents



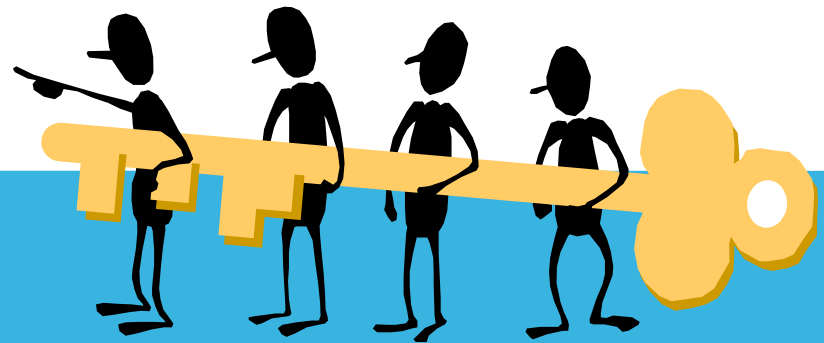


BUILD A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Form a Key Communicator Group

Who is in your group?

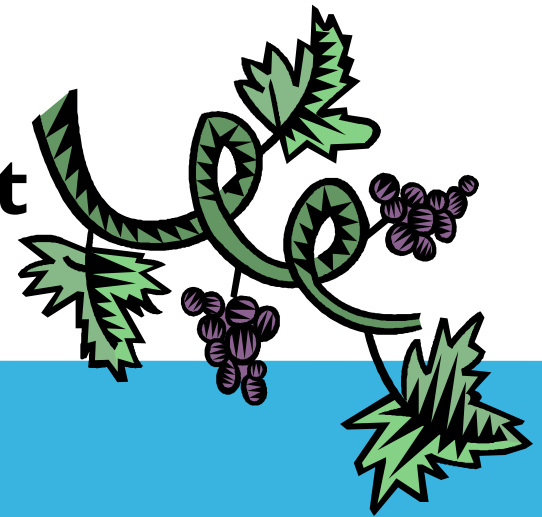
- **Network of informal leaders who establish solid two-way communications**
- **Not necessarily your visible leaders**



Key Communicator Group

Why?

- Disseminate accurate information
- Correct misinformation
- Source of input
- Builds support (grapevine)
- Personal face-to-face contact



IN SUMMARY...

- **Choose your words carefully**
- **Share the facts**
- **Stay away from jargon and statistics – talk about real impact on real kids, teachers and your community**
- **Listen**
- **Tailor messages and talking points**
- **Encourage 2-way engagement**

**Open, honest, direct, regular communication
is always the best practice!**





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