

April 2019

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- **2019-20 key dates for school calendars**

The annual list of key dates for the school year includes interesting and important events to help you plan your school calendar for 2019-20.

Please note that some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

- **The benefits of critical comments on your social media channels**

Social media makes it easier than ever to hear comments from your critics. This is actually an advantage - if you know about negative sentiments, you can prepare your responses and engage your dissenters. Read how and why to consider these comments when you make decisions.

- **Celebrate your staff during appreciation week events**

School staff, administrators and volunteers do great work on behalf of students, and there are many appreciation events on the calendar to celebrate them. Here are some ideas to help schools recognize them for their work.

- **Communicating about deaths**

When a staff member or student dies, how do you respond to the tragedy? It is essential to have a protocol ready when you don't know what to say during these sad events.

- **School board responses: Kindergarten behavior crisis**

Student behavior is a hot topic in schools around the country. School boards can and should take the lead on the issue. Read tips to help take charge of this challenging issue.

- **Insights for Parents: Helping Kids Communicate**

Employers consistently list communication as a top job skill for the workers they hire. Children can develop these important verbal and written skills with real-life practice as they grow. Read tips to help them learn to communicate effectively.

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Washington State
School Directors' Association

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2019-20 Key Dates for School Calendars

Here are some special days you may want to note on your 2019-20 school year calendar or take into consideration as you establish programs for next year. They are from Resources for Planning the School Calendar, published and distributed by the National School Public Relations Association, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855. Order online at nspra.org/products or call (301) 519-0496. The price is \$40 per copy plus shipping and handling.

2019

Date Observance/Holiday

Sept. 1-30	Library Card Sign-Up Month
Sept. 2	Labor Day
Sept. 8	International Literacy Day
Sept. 8	Grandparents' Day
Sept. 8-14	National Arts in Education Week
Sept. 11	Patriot Day
Sept. 15- Oct. 15	Hispanic Heritage Month
Sept. 15-16	Mexican Independence Days
Sept. 16	Mayflower Day
Sept. 17	Citizenship/Constitution Day
Sept. 17-23	Constitution Week
Sept. 21	International Day of Peace
Sept. 23	First Day of Autumn
Sept. 28	National Good Neighbor Day
Sept. 29- Oct. 1	Rosh Hashanah*
Oct. 1	Child Health Day
Oct. 1-31	Crime Prevention Month
Oct. 1-31	Czech Heritage Month
Oct. 1-31	Italian American Heritage and Culture Month
Oct. 1-31	National Bullying Prevention Month
Oct. 1-31	National Principals Month
Oct. 1-31	Polish American Heritage Month

Date Observance/Holiday

Oct. 1-31	Trick or Treat for UNICEF Month
Oct. 2	International Walk to School Day
Oct. 6	German American Day
Oct. 6-12	National Metric Week
Oct. 6-12	Fire Prevention Week
Oct. 6-12	National Educational Office Professionals Week
Oct. 8-9*	Yom Kippur
Oct. 14	Canadian Thanksgiving
Oct. 14	Columbus Day
Oct. 14-18	National School Lunch Week
Oct. 16	World Food Day
Oct. 20-26	National Character Counts Week
Oct. 21-25	National School Bus Safety Week
Oct. 23-31	Red Ribbon Week (Drug-Free America)
Oct. 24	United Nations Day
Oct. 26	Make a Difference Day
Oct. 31	Halloween
Nov. 1-30	Native American Heritage Month
Nov. 3	Standard Time
Nov. 5	Election Day
Nov. 11	Veterans Day

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

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Key Dates

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Date Observance/Holiday	
Nov. 18-22	American Education Week
Nov. 19	Gettysburg Address Anniversary
Nov. 20	Education Support Professionals Day
Nov. 21	National Parental Involvement Day
Nov. 22	Substitute Educators Day
Nov. 24-30	National Family Week
Nov. 28	Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 1	World AIDS Day
Dec. 7	Pearl Harbor Day
Dec. 10	Human Rights Day
Dec. 15	Bill of Rights Day
Dec. 21	First Day of Winter
Dec. 22-30	Hanukkah*
Dec. 25	Christmas
Dec. 26- Jan. 1	Kwanzaa

2020

Date Observance/Holiday	
Jan. 1	New Year's Day
Jan. 1	Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary
Jan. 1-31	School Board Recognition Month
Jan. 19	World Religion Day
Jan. 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 25	Chinese New Year
Feb. 1	National Freedom Day
Feb. 1-29	African American History Month
Feb. 1-29	National Children's Dental Health Month
Feb. 2	Groundhog Day
Feb. 3-7	National School Counseling Week
Feb. 12	Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
Feb. 14	Valentine's Day
Feb. 17	National PTA Founders Day
Feb. 17	Presidents' Day
Feb. 22	George Washington's Birthday

Date Observance/Holiday	
Feb. 22-29	National FFA Week
Feb. 25	Mardi Gras
Feb. 26	Ash Wednesday
Feb. 26- April 11	Lent
March 1-31	American Red Cross Month
March 1-31	Irish American Heritage Month
March 1-31	Music in Our Schools Month
March 1-31	National Middle Level Education Month
March 1-31	National Nutrition Month®
March 1-31	Social Work Month
March 1-31	Women's History Month
March 1-31	Youth Art Month
March 2	NEA's Read Across America (Dr. Seuss's Birthday)
March 2-6	Classified School Employees Week
March 2-6	National School Breakfast Week
March 2-8	National Foreign Language Week
March 8	International Women's Day
March 8	Daylight Saving Time
March 11	Johnny Appleseed Day
March 15-21	National Poison Prevention Week
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 19	Absolutely Incredible Kid Day®
March 19	First Day of Spring
March 20	Bahá'í New Year's Day
March 21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

*Dates differ in some states. Usually scheduled for first or second week in March

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

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Key Dates

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Date Observance/Holiday

April 1 April Fools' Day
April 1-30 National Poetry Month
April 1-30 National Autism Awareness Month
April 1-30 School Library Month
April 2 International Children's Book Day
April 7 World Health Day
April 8-9 Passover* (First Days)
April 10 Good Friday
April 12 Easter
April 15-16 Passover (Concluding Days)
April 19-25 National Library Week
April 19-25 National Volunteer Week
April 19-25 National Coin Week
April 19-25 National Student Leadership Week
April 19-25 Administrative Professionals Week
April 20 Patriot's Day
April 20-21 Holocaust Remembrance Day*
April 20-24 Public School Volunteer Week
April 22 Administrative Professionals Day
April 22 Earth Day
April 23 Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day™
April 24 First Day of Ramadan
April 24 National Arbor Day
May 1 Law Day
May 1 School Lunch Hero Day
May 1-7 National Physical Education and Sports Week
May 1-31 Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 1-31 Better Hearing and Speech Month
May 1-31 National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
May 1-31 Preservation Month
May 1-31 Food Allergy Action Month

Date Observance/Holiday

May 3 World Press Freedom Day
May 3-9 Be Kind to Animals Week
May 3-10 National Music Week
May 4 Horace Mann's Birthday
May 4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week
May 5 Cinco de Mayo
May 5 National Teacher Day
May 6 National Bike to School Day
May 6 National School Nurse Day
May 8 World Red Cross Day
May 10 Mother's Day
May 16 Armed Forces Day
May 18 Victoria Day (Canada)
May 25 Memorial Day
May 31 World No Tobacco Day
June – July Fireworks Safety Month
June 1-30 Caribbean-American Heritage Month
June 1-30 Great Outdoors Month
June 5 World Environment Day
June 14 Race Unity Day
June 14 Flag Day
June 16 International Day of the African Child
June 19 Juneteenth
June 20 First Day of Summer
June 21 Father's Day

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

Please note: Some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

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The benefits of critical comments on your social media channels

Naysayers and critics — in the old days, they showed up at your board meetings and wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper. Nowadays, they are more likely to appear on your district social media channels or the “Info” email inbox attached to your website. They are still there, and they are more important than ever to the success of your district.

Social media and email provide effective tools for engaging cynics and getting the best out of their perspectives. But it takes discipline and hard work to use online forums to move your district in a positive direction without providing a platform for negativity and division. Naysayers are more than just concerned citizens. They are people who are passionate enough to call you out when they think you are making mistakes. This can be disturbing, but their voices should be welcomed.

The days of “sit down and be quiet” are gone

For decades, dissenting opinions were tolerated at best and silenced at worst in school board rooms. The conventional wisdom held that you had to let them have their say to a point but you didn’t have to let them slow you down—unless they happened to be politically powerful. It was a given that free speech rights applied to everyone to a point. There was grudging acceptance in school board rooms that the naysayers needed a chance to vent briefly before being told to sit down.

This “sit down and be quiet” attitude was sometimes overtly rude. But more often it took the subtler tones of restrictions on testimony length and parliamentary maneuvers that shut off the conversation and moved the issue to a speedy resolution. The idea was to give the naysayers their say briefly, get the business done and maintain a sense of unity in the district.

Understand and embrace your dissenters

Fast forward a few decades and we see a new emphasis on embracing and protecting the voice of the dissenters. Part of this move has no doubt been due to the tireless effort of advocates for equity in the schools. But another component is the concept of adaptive leadership that has been evolving throughout business, education and many other types of organizations.

Adaptive leadership is based on the theory that there are two basic types of challenges — technical and adaptive. Technical problems can be solved by the existing knowledge of experts. Adaptive challenges require new learning. One of the greatest challenges for leaders in all school districts is being able to correctly differentiate between the two types of challenges.

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Adaptive problems require changes to behaviors — and can create dissenters

Social Media
Critics

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A simple change in school security may seem like a technical problem with a simple solution — just lock the back gate and make everyone enter campus through the front driveway. However, it might actually be an adaptive challenge in disguise because the whole school community will have to learn new ways of getting their children to and from school safely, crossing new streets, walking through different neighborhoods, coming into contact with people from different cultures. All of these things could add up to challenges that require new ways of thinking and acting instead of a simple technical fix. In this example, an adaptive change would benefit from hearing all voices, not just those who support the change.

In this world of sorting the technical from the adaptive challenges, the naysayer has an important role. The dissenting voice is the one that needs protecting because it is the one that will help move the community to new learning by pointing out concerns that may not have been considered in the decision-making process.

This results in courageous conversations because it challenges the status quo of the system or decision. And when it comes to adaptive changes, the status quo is automatically no longer an option.

If listened to, dissenting voices are most likely to encourage creative thinking. It is human nature to look for solutions and collaborate. But until the real issues are addressed via uncomfortable conversations, those solutions will never even be explored.

When the tension becomes great enough in a community conversation, a true leader becomes willing to take risks. He or she wants to change the paradigm and get the dialogue unstuck. And most often, that leader can look back and thank a naysayer or dissenting voice for getting the ball rolling.

Nurturing your dissenters via social media

So, how do you encourage dissenting voices in school communications? Social media provides a great opportunity to do just that. However, social media is neither self-policing nor self-operating. You have to work to make it meaningful. The same goes for email communications. The “Info” inbox attached to your school website is useless without a commitment to take questions seriously and do the work to answer them thoroughly. You are better off not asking for feedback if you are just going to ignore it or answer it with canned responses.

All social media in a district must start with solid social media policy, which ensures that all opinions are treated with respect and all people are treated with dignity. Spell out what will not be tolerated — discrimination, profanity, hatred, etc. There are many good policy examples online. The key is to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and people who are not OK with that are not allowed to stay.

Once the policy is in place, allow the discussions to become real, not real personal. Bashing people is not acceptable. But bashing on ideas can be encouraged. That is the value of dissent — the heat-testing of ideas. If your newest initiative cannot stand up to a heated discussion on social media, it might not stand up in real life either.

The best way to honor dissenting voices is to listen to them, provide feedback and answer their questions. And to truly answer tough questions requires research and perseverance on the part of the communicator. If customer concerns are all addressed by rote talking

points, it will become obvious that you are prepared to defend positions rather than engage in dialogue. Effective conversation on social media means a commitment to pausing the discussion to find the answers and then taking the time to present them accurately and fairly. The payoff is there because for every vocal critic you answer, there could be another hundred silent people who had the same opinion or concern. By answering one, you are answering many.

Now, when someone has said the same thing several times, or several people have said essentially the same thing, it is OK to say, “We have addressed that several times in a previous post on the topic, which is readily accessible at the following link.” The conversation does not have to go on and on without end, but when a tough question has been asked, the answer should stand. And if the answer changes after getting customer feedback, that should be noted as well. It is a sign of strength to admit shortcomings and make necessary adjustments.

But what if the critics are filling your email inbox? If it is just a few, they should be answered individually and their feedback should be shared up the line of district leadership. If a major campaign of form letter emails has been launched against your district, it is appropriate to respond with a copy and paste message that acknowledges receipt and explains that due to the high volume of messages on this topic, individual responses will not be possible.

However they reach you, the naysayers should be valued. Dissenting voices are necessary when it comes to tackling the toughest problems in our schools. By considering them a helpful part of courageous conversations, the critical voices become part of strong solutions. Social media and email provide tools for the diligent school district to embrace those contrary voices.

Contributed by Jay Remy, communications consultant

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Celebrate your staff during appreciation week events

In May, several important employee groups will be honored for their work to support students. School Lunch Hero Day is May 1; Teacher Appreciation Week is May 4-8; National School Nurse Day is May 6; and National Music Week is May 3-10.

May is a busy month for recognizing and appreciating specific staff groups, but there are other similar events throughout the year for all of the important groups and people who help make school successful for students. These events include:

- National Principals Month, October
- National Education Office Professionals Week, Oct. 6-12
- Education Support Professionals Day, Nov. 20
- Substitute Educators Day, Nov. 22
- School Board Recognition Month, January
- National School Counseling Week, Feb. 3-7
- Classified School Employees Week, generally the second week in March, although the dates differ in some states.
- National Library Week, April 19-25
- National Volunteer Week, April 19-25
- National Student Leadership Week, April 19-25
- Administrative Professionals Week, April 19-25

See additional events in the Key Dates publication in this month's issue.

Recognize and thank these important contributors

Education is a labor-based business. Student achievement would not be possible without the tremendous people power supporting our schools and students. All of these people, except volunteers and school board members, get paid for their work, but we know they don't dedicate themselves to their jobs just because of the money. The majority of staff in our schools sincerely care about students.

Surely, they are thanked for their efforts during the normal course of their work. However, the extra boost that a special tribute brings can help them feel truly appreciated. Mark your calendar with these annual events and make plans to celebrate staff with a little something extra that says you appreciate their work and you are glad they are serving students.

How to recognize staff contributions

Staff recognition can be personalized or broadcast. If there is a budget, a catered meal for a small group, or even the whole school may be appreciated. If not, special recognition at a

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meeting or in the school newsletter can also be the best gesture.

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The goal in recognizing people is to make them feel valued, respected and appreciated. Be sure to offer sincere and heartfelt thanks and let your staff know that you appreciate them all year but you are taking this opportunity to express your gratitude.

If the staff recognition involves someone you work closely with, a hand-written note of appreciation, a phone call or a shout-out during a staff meeting lets them know you notice and appreciate them.

Everyone responds differently to being the center of attention. Tailor your thank you to the comfort level of your staff. If they are embarrassed at being in the spotlight, something less public would suit them better. If they are the lucky recipients of student artwork in their own classrooms, a student-made creation may not have the same impact for them as it would for staff who do not work directly with students.

Online resources for national recognition events

Most of the appreciation and recognition events are celebrated nationally, which means there is a sponsoring entity. The organization behind the event generally has helpful background information on its website that explains when and why the event was started, how to describe the objective of the event, and a list of resources and activities to help you in your districts.

A good example is National Music Week, which has as its objective “to create an understanding and appreciation of the value of music in the home, the community, the nation, and the world.” National Music Week is sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs (NFMC).” www.nfmc-music.org/about-us/national-music-week

Additionally, the website includes the why of celebrating during this week, forms and requirements for official participation, who might be target participants or sponsors, contact information for event organizers, the history and key dates of the event. This site even offers ideas for local celebrations for target audiences that include businesses, public and private schools, libraries, service clubs, churches and music clubs.

The National Federation of Music Clubs has provided a comprehensive resource for this event. Most, but not all, of the national recognition events also have suggestions or resources to help localize the events.

Be sure to check with your state school board association as well. There is often a resource section for national events on the website and district can often download copies of signed governor’s proclamations for posting on the district website. It’s a nice touch that emphasizes the value of these staff tributes.

Recognition round-up: Additional ideas to help staff feel appreciated

- **Personal profile:** Highlight a different staff member every week on your school or district website or in your school newsletter.
- **Invite others to recognize coworkers:** Close each staff meeting with time for staff shout-outs, allowing staff to thank colleagues for any reason.
- **PA announcement:** Thank staff during the morning announcements for going above and beyond.
- **Food:** Food is always appreciated. Organize a staff breakfast, or bring special treats for

staff meetings.

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Volunteers and other partners

- **Public thanks:** This is what social media is for. Offer a special thanks for an individual or group on your social platforms. Try to include a photo. Add the message to the school reader board and/or post it in the school newsletter.
- **Public thank you:** Present a certificate of appreciation at a school board meeting. Or introduce the volunteer or community partner at a basketball game or other school event.
- **Use the media:** Have the superintendent write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece in the local newspaper, acknowledging the contribution of volunteers and business partners who make a difference in your school.
- **Enlist students:** Volunteers are there for the kids. This is a good time for hand-made student art tributes.
- **Handwritten card:** Never underestimate the impact of a handwritten note in gratitude for a specific task or dedicated commitment in service to the school.

Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant

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Communicating about deaths

An elementary student dies of cancer. Two high school seniors are killed in a car crash on the way to school. A middle school teacher commits suicide.

Such tragedies can rock a school, and it's important to communicate quickly with students, staff and parents when they happen. But knowing what to say — and what not to say — is not easy. That's why it's essential to have a protocol in place for what to do when death impacts your school.

The shock and grief that occur when a tragedy happens generate a wide range of reactions. For staff, it can be a particularly hard time because they need to be available for students at a time when they may be grieving themselves.

By having a crisis plan already in place, schools can be ready to react quickly if a tragedy occurs. This plan should spell out in detail what needs to be done when a tragedy happens, listing the steps that need to be taken and identifying the individuals responsible for taking them. It should also include sample letters and announcements that can be modified to address different scenarios.

A key piece of this plan is having a crisis response team ready to respond. The crisis response team typically consists of school counselors and mental health specialists who are trained in dealing with deaths and other tragedies. As soon as they are informed of the death, response team members meet to determine the correct information, as well as the wishes of the deceased's family. They then work with school staff to communicate with staff, students and parents and to support them in dealing with the news.

Fortunately, there are many resources available to guide schools that are dealing with the death of a student or staff member. The Dougy Center website (www.dougy.org) includes tip sheets for school personnel, links to articles and other information about helping students deal with grief.

Two books that address this issue are *Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers and When Death Impacts Your School: A Guide for School Administrators*. Both are available in the Dougy Center online bookstore (www.tdcbookstore.org/store/c4/Books.html).

The National Association of School Psychologists offers this advice on what to do when your school experiences the death of a student or staff member:

Inform staff

A briefing meeting with staff should occur to inform them of the circumstances of the death and to provide teachers with guidelines on how to share information about the death with their students. Present information about how students grieve and what behaviors might

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be expected. Stress the need for maintaining routines during the day as much as possible, allowing flexibility to talk about the death and its impact when students need such a discussion. Establish referral procedures for students requiring additional support.

Communicate with parents

Parents should receive a letter informing them of what has happened, how the school responded, how they can help their children, and where they can receive help.

Inform students

Information should be shared on a class-by-class basis. Assemblies and use of a public address system should be discouraged. Encourage discussion, and recognize that the day will not be a normal day. Students and staff will need to discuss and review the life and death of the person, as well as process their own reactions. Have counselors available to provide support.

Encourage students and staff to reach out to the family

Students may need help knowing what to say and what to do. School personnel should have a presence at the funeral. Shape a group response. It may be helpful to students and staff to respond as a group. Depending on the needs, circumstances, and culture, responses include contributing flowers or memorializing the deceased in other ways.

It is important to respond in the same manner for every student or staff member who dies.

Think ahead

Schools often allow students to play a role in memorializing the person who died. However, it's smart to have a policy regarding memorial services or other commemorations so that you are prepared in advance. The policy should include the answers to these questions:

- Will your school provide the opportunity to acknowledge the death of a student or staff member through some kind of memorialization?
- What kind of memorialization activities will be allowed?
- Under what circumstances will your school consider memorialization activities? The death of a staff member or student? What if the death is from suicide, or a violent death? Whatever policy or precedent the school sets should apply to all deaths.

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School board responses: Kindergarten behavior crisis

If severe behavior issues have emerged in your kindergarten and primary grades — the type of behavior that puts staff and other students in physical danger — you are not alone. Districts nationwide are scrambling to cope with this alarming trend of disrupted instruction from students who have trouble managing their emotions and behavior.

Districts are implementing a variety of programs and tactics in response to this trend, including teacher training, emotional/behavioral classroom curriculum, parent workshops and “transition classrooms” with specially trained instructional assistants. As district leaders implement these emerging programs to address the problem, how we talk about “these bad children” needs to be carefully framed, or you’ll have angry parents from both sides at your board meetings as you grapple with short-term solutions to avert a crisis.

If you haven’t experienced these rumblings, you’re lucky. Regardless, now is the time to be proactive. In Oregon, teachers — not school boards — have claimed the public spotlight and therefore have framed the issue. That puts many boards in the position of reacting, not leading. The Oregon Education Association, representing 44,000 teachers, released a report calling classroom disruptions a “significant and growing problem,” and calling this trend “unprecedented,” seeping into traditional, not just special education, classes.

While teachers are often considered the most credible sources of information, school boards need to step up — in response to problems emerging, but preferably before, because taxpayers have entrusted YOU with the moral responsibility to provide a safe learning environment.

Tips to get ahead of the issue and claim a leadership role

It’s your role to elevate this issue: Do it calmly and openly, without blame — and not in executive session (unless specific cases need attention). Ask your school leaders to gather data and report during a board session. Do this before you need to address behavior issues with immediate corrective action — which could put board members on the defensive, and force you into budget increases without much lead time to digest and debate.

The frame game: Frame it as a collective sense of urgency — create a long-term plan, because behavior in primary grades affects later learning ... and graduation rates. Find research to support spending money now to save later. Explore training in ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and TIP, (trauma-informed practices). Understand what “serious physical harm,” means and define when to physically restrain a child.

The blame game! Recognize that talking about severe behavioral problems will elicit strong emotions — from blaming parents and threatening expulsion, to expressing outrage like

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“why are five-year-olds stabbing each other and screaming obscenities?” These aren’t the questions to ask, and the debate will only lead to more blaming. Turn the discussion into action: The bottom line is these children need help at the basic, social level before they can learn — nothing less, so what can we do to help?

And be clear that “these children” are your children, too, and their success contributes to the success of the whole district. Be sure to remind parents that it is important to support all kids with the tools they need to be successful rather than targeting and disparaging students who have special behavioral needs.

Focus on building your parent relationships

Districts can reduce anger and frustration among parents by helping them understand the issues around the higher rate of behavioral issues that teachers and schools are addressing. It is important to develop relationships with families before they enter school and strengthen partnerships with local programs, like clubs, after-school programs, social service groups so you can build trust and create opportunities for conversations. Talk to them about the behavioral issue as a whole and the tactics you are using to address it.

Topics to discuss...lowering class size, temporary staff and coaches, counselors, student mentors, early childhood evaluations for ages three to five to identify special needs and IEP needs.

Reach out to all parents — not just parents of children with behavior issues. Imagine the emotional reaction parents may have when they realize their child’s classroom is so disruptive, learning has come to a halt, period. They’ll come to you for answers. Share information with them frequently and offer a way for them to communicate with the district when they have questions or input.

The name game: As you craft solutions, avoid the term “behavior” in naming programs. Try neutral labels like Transition Classroom, or “Ready for School.”

Know state laws: State departments of education usually govern discipline laws, such as when children can be physically touched. For example, Oregon law limits when a teacher can physically restrain students to when “serious physical harm” could occur. As a result, districts have told teachers to handle these incidents using methods like “classroom clears.”

Gather data: If you’re not tracking this data, start now. In Oregon, it’s been difficult to quantify how much the problem of disruptive behavior has grown because most districts don’t keep uniform data about student outbursts. But data looking at teacher injuries offers insight.

Lastly, realize that when a child is screaming or having a melt-down (often called “deregulation” by educators), they’re crying for help ... and it’s our job to help them.

I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Helping Kids Communicate



**April
2019**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Communication skills are at the top of almost every list of important skills for today's workers. Employers continue to cite the need for improvements in their workers' ability to communicate well with coworkers, supervisors and customers.

Considered a "soft skill" or interpersonal skill, workers should be able to communicate effectively verbally and in writing,

Helping children practice their communication skills

Students can have an edge in the job market if they develop these skills in school and through real-life situations. Social media interaction may be causing greater real-life isolation — people who are comfortable with digital communication lack practice with in-person conversation.

In a Screenagers blog post, Dr. Delaney Ruston shares how she helps her children build their conversational confidence in public by encouraging them to ask for what they want as a customer and making friendly conversation with others.

"Today I was talking with a 12-year-old about social media and self-confidence and he told me that posting pictures of himself doing cool things can "boost" his confidence. He then added, "... but, I feel like most of my confidence comes from actually talking to people in person because it is a lot harder."

Since my kids were toddlers I started encouraging them to ask questions, make comments, ask directions, make requests, give compliments, and order food from people in the world that are new to them (in safe settings, of course). I am purposely not using the word "stranger" because that has taken on such negative connotations--the fact that it has "strange" in the word, the idea of "stranger danger", etc."

<http://bit.ly/2tMPfqb>

The ideal job applicant is comfortable in social interactions and in workplace conversations. If they have these abilities, they will have an edge in the job market and may actually live longer as well, according to a report cited by Dr. Ruston:

"In a Forbes interview [former Surgeon General Vivek] Murthy said "Loneliness and weak social connections are associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity. Loneliness is also associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression, and anxiety."

(Over)

Top 10 communication skills: A list by recruiters and hiring managers

When students are ready to apply for work, they should focus on improving workplace communication skills. It is important to note that communication is a two-way process that includes what is said and how messages are conveyed nonverbally.

Listening: If you're not a good listener, it's going to be hard to comprehend what you're being asked to do. Take the time to practice active listening, paying close attention to what the other person is saying, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person says to ensure understanding.

Nonverbal Communication: Your body language, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice color the message you are trying to convey. A relaxed, open stance and a friendly tone will make you appear approachable. Look the person in the eye to demonstrate that you are focused on the conversation; however, be sure not to stare.

Clarity and Concision: Good verbal communication means saying just enough — don't talk too much or too little. Try to convey your message clearly and directly, whether you're speaking to someone in person, on the phone, or via email.

Friendliness: Through a friendly tone, a personal question, or simply a smile, you will encourage your coworkers to engage in open and honest communication with you. It's important to be nice and polite in all your workplace communications.

Confidence: Confidence shows your coworkers that you believe in what you're saying and will follow through. Exuding confidence can be as simple as making eye contact or using a firm but friendly tone.

Empathy: Using phrases as simple as, "I understand where you are coming from" demonstrate that you have been listening to the other person and respect their opinions. Even when you disagree with an employer, coworker, or employee, it is important for you to understand and respect their point of view.

Open-Mindedness: Enter into conversation with a flexible, open mind. Be open to listening to and understanding the other person's point of view, rather than simply getting your message across, even with people with whom you disagree.

Respect: People will be more open to communicating with you if you convey respect for them and their ideas. Using a person's name, making eye contact, and actively listening when a person speaks will make the person feel appreciated. On the phone, avoid distractions and stay focused on the conversation. Convey respect through email by editing your message so it is not sloppily written or confusing.

Feedback: Being able to appropriately give and receive feedback is an important communication skill. Managers and supervisors should continuously look for ways to provide constructive feedback through email, phone calls, or weekly status updates.

Picking the Right Medium: An important communication skill is to simply know what form of communication to use. For example, some serious conversations (layoffs, resignation, changes in salary, etc.) are almost always best done in person.