



# On Call

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(360) 493-9231.

**January  
2018**

Washington State  
School Directors'  
Association  
221 College Street N.E.  
Olympia, WA 98516

- **Communicating through images**

Humans can process information quickly and effectively when it is in visual format. Adding visual elements like photographs, illustrations, charts and graphics can help you reach a wider audience.

- **Evaluate your election results: What to do when you win and when you lose**

Your work doesn't stop after your school finance elections in November. The work after the election will set you up for success next time, regardless of whether you won or lost. Review this checklist for ideas that you may have overlooked and use the checklist forms to help with next steps.

- **The new currency: Getting their attention in three seconds**

To share information, you need to get attention first. This is not an easy task. You can improve your reach and your efficiency if you follow these rules for effective websites and messages to grab attention.

- **Maintaining civility at board meetings**

Public meetings are the source of greater tension in today's political climate. Hot-button issues can bring out even more passionate participation from audiences and even board members themselves. Keeping discussion calm and participation broad can be a challenge, but it will result in better policy development. Here are tips to maintain civility at your meetings..

- **Here's to You!**

### **Tips for your good health**

This issue has information about healthy social media use, depression and cancer fact sheets.

- **Insights for Parents: Student success**

At mid-school year, parents and students can reflect on school success and areas for improvement to help ensure a strong finish to the school year. Read about small changes parents can make to increase the chances for school success.



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## Communicating through images

### *Improving your effectiveness through photos, charts, and infographics*

People have used images to communicate since cavemen first painted hunting scenes on cave walls. And with good reason. Humans are hardwired to process images quickly and easily. In fact, our brains process images astoundingly faster than written words — 60,000 times faster, according to popular estimates (<http://bit.ly/2SEu97H>). Almost 50 percent of our brains are involved in visual processing. In addition, people retain information better when they see it in a visual format.

A preference for images isn't simply a byproduct of our technology-driven, social media-focused world. It's part of who we are. So here are a few tips on using images to better engage your audiences and enhance your communications.

### **Building your visual toolbox**

Images can be a vital way of breaking up text, drawing in readers, and helping to tell your story. However, as with any task, knowing the best tool for the job is key. Below are a variety of image-based tools and a little bit about when and how to use each one.

#### **Photographs**

As educators, we all know the power and impact of a photo. A great photograph of a child at play or in the classroom can be a hugely effective way of bringing readers in and helping them connect with your message. Whether you are featuring photos on your school website, district bond materials, or in a parent newsletter, good quality photographs of your students should be a regular part of your district communications.

Photos set the tone and convey emotion. They can create a sense of community and make readers feel a part of your school or district. While there are lots of great stock photos out there, whenever possible, use photos of your students. Investing in a good quality camera, or hiring a photographer, can result in wonderfully personal images that will resonate with your audiences.

#### **Illustrations**

As with photos, illustrations can be a wonderful way to complement and enhance your communications. Illustrations can be particularly effective when you have a specific visual need and you don't have a photo that does the job. Whether you are including an illustration of a proposed new school or featuring goofy caricatures of teachers on an awards event program, illustrations can enhance your communications.

#### **Chart and graphs**

Charts and graphs — pie charts, bar graphs, line charts, flowcharts, or organizational charts — are a staple of meetings, presentations, and annual reports. These handy tools can be

*(Over)*

of immense value for a wide range of communication, from websites to fliers, and with a wide range of audiences, from board members to parents. Charts and graphs allow us to communicate data in a visual manner and can help our audience understand, retain, and access key pieces of information more readily. However, in order for the chart or graph to be an effective communication tool, we need to keep its content focused and clear. A reader should be able to glance at the graphic and quickly understand its key takeaways.

### **Infographics**

Infographics have gained popularity in recent years as an effective and versatile visual communication tool. An infographic is a representation of information in a graphic format. It is a mix of graphics (icons, drawings, symbols, etc.) and text. Infographics are designed to make complex information easy to understand, and they work well with how our brains process information. People use infographics to communicate key messages, present data in a clear and compelling format, point out patterns or trends in data, and create visual timelines, among other uses.

A good infographic needs three things: the data, clear organization, and proper use of visual elements such as images and fonts. Infographics are most effective when they are simple and don't contain too much information in one graphic. Remember, you are providing a break from text-heavy content. White space and a balance of text and graphics are key. Generally, an infographic will be most effective when it focuses on one key message, not multiple messages. For some examples of how infographics are used in education, visit: [www.easel.ly/blog/10-great-examples-of-using-infographics-for-education/](http://www.easel.ly/blog/10-great-examples-of-using-infographics-for-education/).

### **Using images to tell your story**

A picture or graphic can be powerful, but only when it helps to tell your story. As with anything you are communicating, make sure you have a clear and compelling message. What is it you are trying to get across? Why should your audience care? How does this image help you paint that picture and tell that story? Visual communication tools can be a great way to cut through big blocks of text, simplify complex information or bring data to life. Once you have identified the story you want to tell, infographics and other visual tools can help you draw readers to the key messages and highlight important takeaways. By effectively using visual communication tools, you can boost engagement with your content, improve absorption and retention of your information, and make your communications more effective and impactful.

### **Additional resources:**

- **Five easy steps for using images to communicate information**  
<https://blog.tbhcreative.com/2016/02/using-images-to-communicate-information.html>
- **How to Communicate Better with Infographics**  
[www.easel.ly/blog/communicate-better-infographics](http://www.easel.ly/blog/communicate-better-infographics)
- **Building an Infographic**  
[www.easel.ly/blog/the-13-step-guide-to-building-an-infographic-2/](http://www.easel.ly/blog/the-13-step-guide-to-building-an-infographic-2/)
- **5 simple ways to use infographics in your communications that will make people pay attention**  
[www.stonesoupcreative.com/5-simple-ways-use-infographics-communications-will-make-people-pay-attention](http://www.stonesoupcreative.com/5-simple-ways-use-infographics-communications-will-make-people-pay-attention)



# On Call

## Evaluate your election results: What to do when you win and when you lose

The November election is over and the results are in. Whether you won or lost, your future election success depends on taking the time now to thoroughly review what you did and didn't do in this election that made the difference.

### Start by saying thank you.

- In writing to each and every volunteer.
- In school communications to staff, parents and key community members.
- Via social media, in publications or even a newspaper ad to your community.

### Review how well your campaign worked using measurements that show how well each campaign element was carried out.

- Conduct a post-election meeting with district staff responsible for information activities.
- Conduct a post-election meeting with advocacy committee members.
- At both meetings assess what worked, what didn't, and what you need to do differently next time. Use the attached forms to help you organize those discussions.

### Take time now to assess the accuracy of your research.

- Did you have an accurate random sample of your voters' opinions about the measure?
- Did you use what you learned from the survey to determine what to ask voters to approve?
- Did your advocacy committee use the survey results to develop a research-based campaign?
- Did the voters the campaign identified as potential "yes" voters vote? Or did more voters identified as "no" voters turn out in larger numbers than anticipated?
- Look at the election results precinct by precinct. Which areas of your district were most supportive? Least supportive? Why?
- Are there voter groups and/or neighborhoods that need to be reconnected with your schools before you vote again? How will you communicate with them?
- Use the form provided with this article to help you do the precinct analysis. Then use a precinct map of your district to color the precincts one color for "yes" and another color for "no" so that you can see visually where you need to work.

### Keep your election information where you can find it.

- Once you determine what worked, what didn't, and what you need to do differently next time, write it down.
- Organize and store all your information campaign materials/files and advocacy committee campaign materials/files electronically or physically.
- Make sure all key people know where the materials/files are stored and that the district's information office or superintendent's office has backup copies easily accessible for the next election.

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### **Communicate next steps**

If you won, communicate work in progress:

Post-Election  
Checklist

- Emphasize student achievement for operating fund measures.
- Show project timelines and progress for bond measures.

January 2019  
Page 2

If you lost, communicate the impacts:

- Is what you said would happen now happening?
- How is the measure's failure impacting student learning?
- What will the district do now to listen to the community and determine next steps?

Whether you won or lost, there are things that would have worked better had they been done differently. Now is the time to discuss those things and record your findings. The following worksheets will help you do that.

### **Voter Turnout Worksheet**

### **Evaluation Checklist**

**School District Election Assessment: District information activities for (date/type) election**

**School District Election Assessment: Advocacy Committee activities for (date/type) election**

*Source: Election Success, C&M Communications*

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*Contributed by Jeanne Magmer, communications consultant*

# Checklist

## Common elements of successful finance elections

### How does your election campaign measure up?

Did you . . .	Yes	No
... have a good communications program in place long before your district even thought about placing a measure on the ballot?		
... start early and plan well?		
... have wide community involvement in the discussion of district needs and listen and respond to what you heard?		
... have survey research that showed a fighting chance of winning (at least 60% when a simple majority is required)?		
... make decisions about what to put on the ballot that reflected community priorities and were based on research?		
... have well-planned information programs that explained the measure to all voters using their priorities as identified in research?		
... recruit strong community leadership?		
... have a well-organized, dedicated, hard-working advocacy committee?		
... coordinate advocacy efforts with district/school information for maximum impact?		
... conduct a targeted advocacy campaign planned to meet the unique needs of your community as identified by research?		
... stick to your written, research-based campaign plans and carry them out 100%?		
... identify enough "yes" voters?		
... target the right messages to the right voters?		
... deliver messages to voters with at least three contacts, most of them personal?		
... most importantly, turn out "yes" voters to vote?		
... plan and execute information and advocacy campaigns that set the stage for future election success?		









# On Call

## The new currency: Getting their attention in three seconds

It's no surprise that parents, staff, students — anyone you want to reach — are distracted by too much information, all day, every day. “Getting their attention” is the new currency.

Research from 2013 shows that 90 percent of the world's data was generated in the previous two years ... so you can imagine what's happened since then.

This means short attention spans, which means people take a quick look at your website (or newsletter) and move on, or they ignore posts that don't grab them immediately. Sadly, if you do an internet search on “attention spans,” you'll learn they've shrunk from eight seconds to three.

### Your website is still the first stop

Still, for school districts and schools, social media and your website is the still first place “shoppers” like parents go for information. And seniors — the bulk of your voting population — still rely on searching official websites, along with targeted, personal emails from someone they trust from your school or district.

When people want information about you, say for an election, finance measure, boundary debate or to learn more about a rumor, they start online unless they are well-connected. In that case, they text a “what's up” to the insider they trust, which starts a conversation. If you've grabbed their attention with a great post, they'll keep clicking to read more before calling ... the key in our increasingly “impersonal” world because that's how people start their journey to becoming supporters (or detractors!).

### Do your messages connect with the right people?

How often have you landed on a website and been confused? You've likely given up and gone to the next search result. *Right?*

Be clear, direct and specific for your audiences ... from their point of view. Hopefully you have “buttons” for each group: “Parent? Click here” or “No kids in school? Click here.” Once you've grabbed attention, get to the point. Appeal to “what's in it for me?” at a glance — in three seconds!

### What draws immediate attention?

Use these elements as visuals and messages to grab your audiences:

- Compelling photos of students, including one-minute videos of learning in action you

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- “refresh” on a school or district’s website often (once a week preferably).
- Student artwork, especially on compelling topics such as suicide, loneliness, substance abuse, graduating, anything that elicits an emotional response, but linking to positive action the school is taking. Or just cute cartoons from kindergartners.
- Leader messages with a headline, not “from the superintendent” and connecting to a quick video. Make them personal ... for a quick “live video” at a special positive event, consider wearing a Go Pro. Provide advance warning to visit a school or classroom. Anyone could do this, including a custodian, office staff, or even a student or parent leader, for a fun twist on “why I love this school”.
- Links to “where your money goes in a nutshell” graphic or message, with contact for more detail.
- If you have the technology to connect with teachers (Class Dojo is a good tool), include that link.
- Ask the School Board link — rather than just list your board members, hopefully you include their emails, or a “Q and A” feature that encourages engagement.

Messaging is a hierarchy of ideas that help people understand why your schools are worth supporting or enrolling in, what you’ll provide, and why you offer the best choice.

Messaging guides the flow of content on your website, integrates into brochures, newsletters, key communicator emails. Jennifer Larsen Morrow of Creative Company, a marketing agency in Oregon offered these tip sheets to dive deeper into this flow:

- Positioning guide and worksheet: <http://bit.ly/2QwmrPK>.
- Messaging overview and worksheet: <http://bit.ly/2Uemsqv>.
- 10 rules for website readability guide: <http://bit.ly/2RzhlQ3>.

*Downloads require email sign up.*

### **A final thought**

Even in today’s digital communication age, the most important tool to build understanding and support for complex organizations like school districts is the conversations you have with the people sitting next to you. In fact, digital communications (i.e., texting) is making your communication even more personal ... so keep your influencers (key communicators) informed well before they have to text you to learn what’s going on.

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*Contributed by Shannon Priem, APR, former Oregon School Boards Communications Director, and Jennifer Larsen Morrow, Creative Company, Inc.*



# On Call

## Maintaining civility at board meetings

Most school board meetings tend to be routine and can even be a little boring. But issues do come along that bring out passion and fill the boardroom. Perhaps you need to close a beloved small school as part of budget cuts? Or maybe you want to allow your school-based health center to issue contraceptives?

How do you maintain a civil discourse while discussing these hot-button issues at board meetings?

It can be a challenge. Caught up in the moment, people sometimes get angry, emotional and make personal attacks as they advocate for or against issues they care deeply about. Board meetings can quickly get out of hand if the board doesn't have — and follow — specific rules for conducting meetings.

It boils down to requiring people to treat each other with respect, even when they disagree.

A good first step is to follow rules of parliamentary procedure and in particular Robert's Rules of Order. While these procedures can sometimes seem intimidating and overly formal, they provide a structure for conducting the meetings efficiently and fairly, with participation by the public.

Even when parliamentary procedure is followed, things can get chaotic if the board chair doesn't enforce the rules and demand that speakers show common courtesy and decorum. It's important to keep the discussion focused on the issue being debated and avoid degenerating into personal attacks. The board chair should cut off discussion that becomes too personal or disrespectful and make clear that the behavior is the problem, not the speaker's opinion. Sometimes, if conversations get too heated, the chair might even need to call for a break to give people a chance to calm down and restore order.

Maintaining order is important not only to conducting business efficiently but also to creating an atmosphere where people feel safe to participate. When meetings devolve into loud, rowdy gatherings, many people become afraid to voice their opinion and become the target of ridicule or personal attacks. Some feel physically afraid.

By following established rules and treating all people with respect, the board can encourage active participation in board meetings in a way that allows for robust discussion without turning the meetings into battlefields.

Here are some other tips for maintaining civility at board meetings from the Institute for Local Government ([www.ca-ilg.org](http://www.ca-ilg.org)):

### Set a time limit

It's often best to limit the time allotted to speakers to three minutes or some other designated

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amount, so that a particular speaker doesn't dominate the discussion. Assure people they all will be allowed a turn to speak. That can help prevent people from interrupting others out of fear they won't have an opportunity to give their opinion or rebut a comment. To save time, remind people that if a previous speaker has already expressed their views, they could simply say they agree with the previous speaker. The goal is to create a culture where people are respectful of each other's right to voice an opinion and participate in the meeting.

### **Outline the process**

It can help reduce tension if the board chair, at the start of the meeting, outlines the process to be followed, including any limitations on public participation. Let people know if they need to sign up to speak. Review any time restrictions. Remind them to be respectful of others and that you will cut off any testimony that involves name calling or is otherwise derogatory.

### **Listen, listen, listen**

Listening is an important way board members can show respect to speakers, as well as learn what they want to share. Board members should listen with their whole bodies — making eye contact with the speaker, perhaps taking notes. They should show through their demeanor that they are really hearing and trying to understand what the speaker is saying, even if they don't agree with it. Nothing riles the public more than if it thinks the board has already made a decision but is just going through the motions in hearing public testimony.

### **Separate people from the problem**

Name calling, personal attacks and questioning people's motives only raise tension instead of moving the conversation forward. The board chair should immediately stop any discussion where this happens and remind the speaker to focus on the issue, not personalities.

### **No applause or heckling allowed**

Ask people not to clap, cheer or boo the testimony of different speakers. It can be intimidating for people to share views that they fear will draw boos and ridicule. It also can encourage speakers to focus more on getting applause than in making their point in a respectful manner.

### **Call a recess**

If people ignore the rules, start interrupting other speakers and things get out of hand, the board chair should call a recess. A short break can calm things down and help restore order. If a recess does not work, it may be necessary to remove a disruptor from the meeting. Another option is to end the meeting.

### **Walk the talk**

Board members need to follow the same rules of courtesy and respect as they expect the public to follow. These include:

- limiting statements during discussions to those that move the conversation forward
- keeping remarks brief, to the point and non-repetitive of comments others have made (other than to note agreement)
- avoiding personal attacks (in public and private) and otherwise adhering to the strategies described above.

# Here's to You!

Tips for your good health provided by your district

January 2019

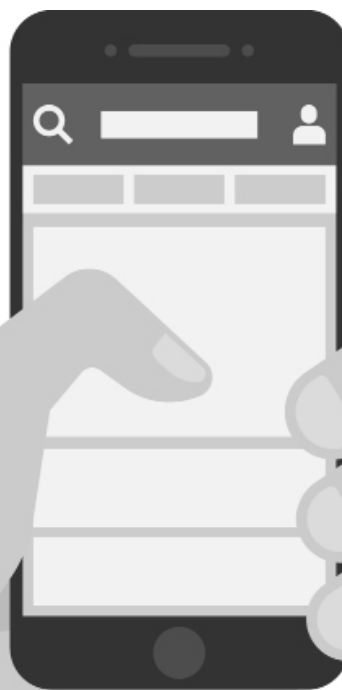
## Social media use linked to depression

*New study shows risk of depression and loneliness increases with higher use*

People devote an enormous amount of time each day to social media activities. "Astonishingly, the average person will spend nearly two hours (approximately 116 minutes) on social media every day, which translates to a total of 5 years and 4 months spent over a lifetime." (*Social Media Today* <http://bit.ly/2St5xyy>)

*Even worse, teens spend up to nine hours each day on social platforms. And social use among all groups is expected to grow as platforms develop.*

A recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania measured the effects of social media use on mental health. The study subjects were graduate students who were instructed to limit their social media activity on all platforms to



30 minutes per day and self-assess their mental health across seven areas: fear of missing out (FOMO), loneliness, autonomy, self-acceptance, anxiety, depression and self-esteem.

The study found that limiting one's social media usage to 30 minutes per day can lead to significant improvements in well-being.

Specifically, less time on social media can lower rates of depression and loneliness.

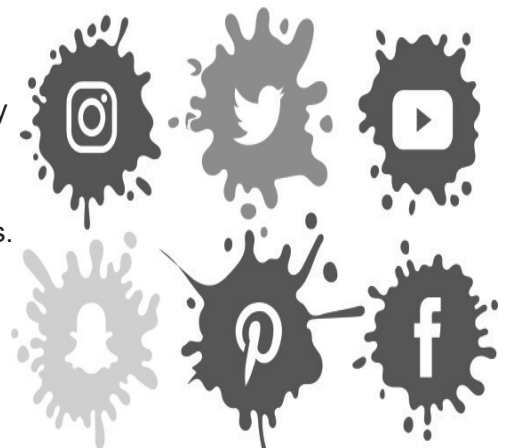
The study is one of the first to identify the effects of social media use and mental health issues. <https://read.bi/2FZPuHo>

### Social media addiction is real. Should you detox?

If you can't remember the last time you went a whole day without checking social media, you may be addicted, and your mental health may be suffering for it. Consider a detox.

Experts suggest a break of about three months to allow dopamine levels — the reward-seeking chemical in your brain — to return to normal levels. The detox could include cutting off social media access completely, or setting time limits for restricted use.

Consider deactivating accounts, uninstalling social media apps, blocking social media sites and, perhaps most importantly, replacing social media with another activity that fills that now open schedule.



Read more information about social media addiction: [www.makeuseof.com/tag/social-media-detox](http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/social-media-detox)

# Get informed: Cancer fact sheets for all of your questions



The National Cancer Institute has a library of cancer fact sheets that answer common questions about more than 70 topics in cancer, including specific cancer types, prevention, detection, treatment, and possible causes. The fact sheets are available in English and Spanish. They are updated and revised based on the latest cancer research.

[www.cancer.gov/publications/fact-sheets](http://www.cancer.gov/publications/fact-sheets)

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## In moderation, selfies can increase happiness

In the midst of warnings about risks to mental health from overuse of social media, a benefit has been found: Selfies can lead to happiness.

A 2016 study by the University of California at Irvine found positive advantages from the obsessive practice that is dominated by teens.

*“Regularly snapping selfies with your smartphone and sharing photos with your friends can help make you a happier person, according to computer scientists. In a*



*first-of-its-kind study published just before back-to-school season, the authors found that students can combat the blues with some simple, deliberate actions on their mobile devices.”*

The study was the first of its kind and relied on daily taking and sharing of photos of the subjects smiling, engaged in something that made them happy and something that would bring happiness to another person.

Researchers found that these photo exercises could help combat depression and manage stressful situations.

“I think this study shows that sometimes our gadgets can offer benefits to users,” said study author, Professor Gloria Mark. <http://bit.ly/2Pm2Qgu>



## Do you suffer from anxiety or depression?

Could you benefit from treatment for depression or anxiety? Probably. Depression is a common disorder that is treatable and often goes undiagnosed. Consider the following statistics from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year.

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment.

People with an anxiety disorder are three to five times more likely to go to the doctor and six times more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric disorders than those who do not suffer from anxiety disorders.

Anxiety disorders develop from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events.

**Find more information on the Anxiety and Depression Association of America website: <https://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics>**

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# I N S I G H T S

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## FOR FAMILIES



### Help Your Child Succeed in School



**January  
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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.

It's a good practice for students and their parents to reflect on school success and review areas to improve to achieve greater school success. The new year is a good time to review how school is going at the halfway mark.

Students need family support all year. A mid-point review is a helpful way to make adjustments that will also benefit students during spring standardized testing. There is still plenty of time to finish the school year strong.

#### **Parents' role in school success**

Parent involvement has a direct impact on student academic achievement. Review the following tips from the Learning Community to ensure that you are helping your child reach his or her potential:

#### **Teacher expectations:**

- Develop a routine or a specific time for homework. Set a time when you are available to help or listen.
- Avoid tardies and absences. Make sure that your child is at school on time every day possible. Missing school has an enormous impact on student achievement.
- Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast each day and gets adequate sleep each night.
- Be a positive role model and demonstrate interest in reading and learning.

#### **Talk to your child about her day. Consider these conversation starters:**

- Tell me about the best part of your day.
- What was the hardest thing you had to do today?
- Tell me about what you read in class.
- Who did you play with/hang out with today? What did you do? What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?
- What rules are different at school than at home? Do you think they're fair?
- Who did you sit with at lunch?
- Can you show me something you learned or did today?

#### **Homework help:**

- Provide quiet study time in a well-lit place.
- Be available to encourage, praise, advise, and supervise.
- Monitor your child's understanding of concepts and skills. Check work for accuracy, neatness, and completeness.
- Cooperate with and be supportive of the child's teacher. Communicate with the teacher if you have concerns about your child.

- Don't do the child's homework for him or her.
- Don't make excuses or allow the child to make excuses for incomplete or sloppy work.
- Don't change, criticize, or belittle a teacher's assignments. If there's a problem, talk to the teacher.
- Don't allow the child to skip an assignment he/she doesn't like.
- Don't fill the child's life with so many non-school activities there is no time left for homework or play.

<http://bit.ly/2FWV2Cp>

### **Academic guides for parents**

It is not easy to help your child in school if you don't know what they are learning and how they are progressing. The National PTA has published a Parents' Guide to Student Success for each grade level. "These guides, based on Common Core standards, were developed by teachers, parents and education experts to provide clear, consistent expectations for what students should be learning at each grade in order to be prepared for college and career."

There is an overview guide for all grades and grade-specific guides for grades kindergarten through grade eight and high school English, language arts/literacy and mathematics.

#### **The guides include:**

- Key items children should be learning in English language arts and mathematics in each grade, once Common Core Standards are fully implemented.
- Activities that parents can do at home to support their child's learning.
- Methods for helping parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher.
- Tips for planning for college and career (high school only).

Find all guides in both English and Spanish on the National PTA website: [www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Parents-Guides-to-Student-Success](http://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Parents-Guides-to-Student-Success).

### **Tips for helping your child during testing**

The National PTA also has tips to help you help your child prepare for standardized tests. These tests, usually administered in spring, can be stressful but are an important educational requirement. Recommendations for helping your child are not much different than helping with homework. Find information at <http://bit.ly/2FS83Np>.

- Don't judge your child's abilities based on a single test score. Any given test provides limited information about what your child knows and is able to do. And many things can influence how your child does on a test.
- Help your child avoid test anxiety. Students with anxiety can become self-critical and lose confidence in their abilities. With any test, encourage your child to plan ahead, start studying in advance and ask the teacher questions if they don't understand the material or what the test will cover.
- After a tough test, sit down with your child to review areas where they had difficulty.