

March 2019

ONcall

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- **The benefits of school board leadership training**

School board leadership training isn't just for the chair and vice chair on your board. Ongoing professional development is an important way to improve board effectiveness by building shared knowledge and values and staying current on new initiatives. Read more about the benefits of board training.

- **Considering hiring an ex-journalist as a school communicator?**

A former news reporter sounds like a perfect fit for your PR position. Be sure your new hire understands the communications role in the school environment so they can transition effectively from the news room to public relations.

- **Do you have a communication plan for immunizations?**

Children are getting sick with preventable diseases that were previously nearing eradication. Illnesses like measles can disrupt school, result in significant school absences and financial impacts, and they can be deadly. If your immunization rate is

- **Evaluating your communications: Understanding and assessing your effectiveness**

Before hiring a communications professional, brush up on best hiring practices and have a clear understanding of the position. The National School Public Relations Association offers a sample policy, job description and definitions for this important role.

- **Finding the right people for the team**

Assessment and evaluation is a standard practice in education, but are you also gathering data to assess your communications? Review the four metrics that can help you track and gauge the effectiveness of your efforts to inform and engage your audiences.

- **Insights for Parents: Immunizing kids against disease**

Preventable infectious diseases are on the rise due to lower rates of immunization. Exemptions to vaccine requirements vary by state. Before parents seek to avoid vaccinating their children, they should know more about the benefits vaccines provide.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (800) 562-8927 or (360) 493-9231.

For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

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Considering hiring an ex-journalist as a school communicator?

Traditional media outlets are downsizing, and more and more journalists are looking for jobs as public relations professionals. They bring valuable experience, established relationships, and a dedication to accuracy, clarity, and deadlines. They are accustomed to dealing with the ambiguity of news events.

One public official recently put it this way when he hired a newly laid-off newspaper journalist as his communications director: “It’s always been my philosophy that you should hire journalists for communication positions. They bring a well-honed eye for news, along with true journalistic integrity that keeps us honest and talking straight.”

But ex-journalists also face significant differences in their roles. Here are tips to help your new former reporter ease the transition.

Adapting the mindset

As a journalist, you’re committed to objectively reporting the news, never tilting it for or against any person, institution, or idea. Your integrity — your credibility — is your calling card. Your responsibility is to the public — readers, viewers, and listeners.

The same tenets of accuracy, clarity, and deadlines hold true in public relations. Credibility is everything. A respected PR professional never misrepresents or misconstrues a situation. The difference is that your job is to serve the best interests of your client; in this case, the school district that employs you.

That doesn’t mean you should ignore bad news or overly hype good news. Doing either will undercut your credibility, your success, and, eventually, your school district’s reputation. But now that you’re on the other side of the news equation, your role is to help the journalists and public understand how this latest development — whatever it may be — fits into the overall picture and how the school district is responding.

If it’s bad news, whether a drop in graduation rates or a financial misstep or a collapsed gym roof, your role is to provide as much detailed information as possible, to be clear about what you don’t yet know and when that information might be available, and to acknowledge the community’s concerns. That last piece might be most important. The school district must be empathetic — genuinely — to public concerns, and you are part of the district’s public face in that regard.

If your emotional skills are wanting, now is the time to work on them.

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Soft skills are important

One truism of management is that talent is overrated in comparison with self-discipline, attitude, work ethic, and the ability to work well with others. Listening — the most important but often overlooked skill of a journalist — remains just as important for a PR professional. Empathy, an equally overlooked trait, is essential. The community cares passionately about its children and its schools.

Often when bad news happens, there is a tendency to try to reassure the public by saying, “We take these concerns very seriously. We’re already doing A, B, and C.” The commitment is sincere; but without being empathetic to the situation, such statements often come across as platitudes that insult the public intelligence.

This is why it is so important to put yourself in the public’s shoes and to apply the journalist adage of “Show, don’t tell.” Tell how the district responded and let the public form its own opinion. That may go against the instincts of some district officials, so do the best you can within the constraints of your job.

Newsrooms are wacky, quirky, freewheeling places where being mouthy is generally tolerated, where disagreement and conflict are understood as part of the collaborative process, and where news priorities can change in an instant. Not so in most other bureaucracies, including school districts.

What you perceive as logical direction can come across as an unrealistic idea or a brash intrusion unless you understand the culture of your organization, as well as the micro-culture within your communications office. Regardless of how much you know about the communications business on a macro level, you must be skilled at the personal level. You must possess the emotional intelligence to work effectively, flexibly and collaboratively with your new colleagues.

As a journalist, you may be accustomed to being somewhat of a loner, working closely with a few colleagues, such as other reporters, photojournalists, and editors, along with sources. In your new role, you likely will have a wider circle of views to include, and you may have less control over the outcome. Pick your battles, especially early on; listen well; and keep your ego in check. Not everything — such as an occasional press release that reads like it’s written by a committee — is worth fighting over.

Understand timing

Journalists expect almost instantaneous turnarounds. They want editors to respond immediately to their work. After all, news is the focus. In contrast, school administrations and staffs have many competing foci. Their sense of deadline might not complement as yours.

Be patient. Calmly think of any tardy contributors or respondents — tardy by your definition, though not necessarily theirs — like recalcitrant news sources. Graciously coach them along. Like them, you also will be juggling a multitude of assignments.

Bottom line

Don’t expect a PR role to be exactly like that of a journalist. There are similarities; there are significant differences. Each job, and each workplace, has its own idiosyncrasies.

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Do you have a communication plan for immunizations?

Preventable diseases are showing up around the country. Once on track for eradication, children are getting sick with measles, mumps and whooping cough in greater numbers as parents opt out of required immunizations. Do your parents understand the immunization requirements and deadlines for your state? Do you have a communications plan for this important topic?

Diseases make a comeback

Contagious, deadly diseases that were once thought to be nearly eradicated can make a comeback if immunization rates fall too low. Recently, measles cases are popping up in several states with serious effects on children and families. Infected children, and other children who were exposed to them, must miss school. Their families face high medical costs and lost work productivity, and the lasting effects of the disease can be debilitating or deadly.

What could happen:

“We know that a disease that is apparently under control can suddenly return, because we have seen it happen in countries like Japan, Australia, and Sweden. Here is an example from Japan. In 1974, about 80 percent of Japanese children were getting pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine. That year there were only 393 cases of whooping cough in the entire country, and not a single pertussis-related death. Then immunization rates began to drop, until only about 10 percent of children were being vaccinated. In 1979, more than 13,000 people got whooping cough and 41 died. When routine vaccination was resumed, the disease numbers dropped again.

The chances of your child getting a case of measles or chickenpox or whooping cough might be quite low today. But vaccinations are not just for protecting ourselves, and are not just for today. They also protect the people around us (some of whom may be unable to get certain vaccines, or might have failed to respond to a vaccine, or might be susceptible for other reasons). And they also protect our children’s children and their children by keeping diseases that we have almost defeated from making a comeback.”

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/whatifstop.htm

Facts about vaccines

Sources for the following facts are at www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-vaccines

1. In the past 60 years, vaccines helped eradicate one disease (smallpox) and are close to eradicating another (polio).
2. Vaccines prevent more than 2.5 million deaths each year.
3. Scientific studies and reviews continue to show no relationship between vaccines and autism.

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4. New and underutilized vaccines could avert nearly four million deaths by 2015.
5. Vaccines cause “herd immunity,” which means if the majority of people in a community have been vaccinated against a disease, an unvaccinated person is less likely to get sick because others are less likely to get sick and spread the disease.
6. Vaccines helped reduce measles deaths globally by 78 percent between 2000 and 2008.
7. There are existing vaccines that could stop rotavirus and pneumonia — two conditions that kill nearly three million children under the age of five every year.
8. The CDC has reported a 99 percent reduction in the incidence of bacterial meningitis caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* since the introduction of the vaccination against the disease in 1988.
9. Not all vaccines are given as shots. Some vaccines are given orally.
10. Most diseases prevented by vaccines are no longer common in the United States. If vaccines weren’t used, just a few cases could quickly turn into tens or hundreds of thousands.

Herd immunity

Herd immunity is an important point that should be emphasized in materials. Immunizations are intended to protect individuals as well as the larger community from diseases. This community immunity benefit develops when a majority of the population is immunized. It reduces the risk of disease and creates a buffer of immunization for people with lower immunity, such as infants, pregnant women or the elderly. Some people cannot get vaccines themselves because of specific health issues. If people around them are immunized, they can also be protected from risks of the diseases.

Facts about opting out

All states require vaccinations for children who attend public schools and daycare centers. And all states allow exemptions for children with allergies, compromised immune systems and/or families with religious or philosophical objections. See a map of state laws and vaccine requirements: www.nvic.org/Vaccine-Laws/state-vaccine-requirements.aspx.

Extensive information for parents about vaccines, disease symptoms, and treatment options are available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://bit.ly/2TyVHwc>

Developing your communication plan for immunization

Infectious diseases are a local and a global concern. Misinformation, or a lack of information about vaccines, is a primary reason for non-vaccination.

“Proactive communication actions are needed to curtail and prevent negative publicity and resistance to immunization, and to build continuous trust in vaccination programs by working with opinion leaders who influence caregivers’ perceptions and behaviors.

Positive attitudes and good interpersonal communication skills of frontline health workers are decisive to promote long-term compliance — well-designed, easy-to-use tools can often bridge the gap if interpersonal communication skill-building programs cannot be assured.” <http://bit.ly/2S3p3Ge>

A strategic communications plan can help ensure that all parents are getting complete and accurate information to make informed decisions about immunizations and school requirements.

For more information about strategic communication plans, see *How to Write a Comms Plan*, August 2018. Key elements include goals, target audiences, messages, tactics, budget, responsible parties and evaluation metrics.

Goals

Do you need to increase immunization rates across the district or in one school? Or do you want to share general information about immunization facts with the larger community to ensure that accurate information is circulating among parents and staff?

Target audiences

Schools should contact parents directly if their children lack required vaccines, but they should also communicate with audiences that can affect opinions about vaccines, including all parents and staff. Be sure to inform your key communicators and consider possible partnership opportunities with healthcare providers in your community.

Messages

It is essential to identify key messages that resonate with each audience. What do you need them to know? It may help to do an informal poll of sample audience members to identify information that may be lacking. Ask people about their understanding of the issue to identify information gaps and misinformation.

Tactics and budget

Parents should be able to easily find information about deadlines and requirements. And staff who are key communicators with parents should have sufficient information in the form of fact sheets, talking points, accessible web content and regular updates from district experts.

Step one should be the district and school websites. Develop a section dedicated to immunization requirements, deadlines and resources. Make it easy to find and highlight it during key dates, such as school registration dates and immunization exclusion deadlines. Include fact sheets about vaccinations and diseases. Consider adding a list of healthcare providers and clinics where vaccines are available, including free clinics if available.

Tactics that may be effective include email newsletters, printed flyers, fact sheets and newsletters, text and phone alerts, social media content, digital ads and radio announcements, ads and interviews.

Be sure to include options for two-way communications such as an informational line for phone calls or emails, dedicated staff who can respond to questions or opportunities for questions and answers at public forms.

When you are ready to update your plan, evaluate your efforts by checking immunization rates among students over the prior year. Consider an electronic survey for staff and parents.

The following chart and example will help you develop your communication plan.

Tactic	Target Audience	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Metric
Website	Parents, staff, Community Members	Dates for developing and publishing content	Communications staff, technology staff	Successful on-time launch, including useful content and resources

Resources

Immunization
Communications

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Why Invest in Communication for Immunization? Evidence and Lessons Learned

<http://bit.ly/2S3p3Ge>

National School Public Relations Association Sample Strategic Communications Action Plan

<http://bit.ly/2MKj0R0>

Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant

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Evaluating your communications: Understanding and assessing your effectiveness

Assessment is an established component of education. Evaluations are standard practice when it comes to professional development or systems improvement. But far too often, we forget to measure or assess our communications effectiveness. Gauging the impact of communications can be hard. Our audiences receive information in a myriad of forms and from multiple sources. In many cases, we receive little to no feedback on how we are doing. However, with a little planning, outreach, and tracking, we can gather valuable information to help us improve our communications' effectiveness and impact.

Setting Communications Metrics

Clear communication goals and metrics should be part of your district's communication plan. You may even choose to have key communications or engagement metrics included in your district-wide strategic plan. Because of the multi-faceted nature of communications and community engagement campaigns, you will likely need to set a range of metrics to gauge your effectiveness.

Type of metrics you might consider include:

Activity Metrics: Activity metrics assess what you are doing. How well are you implementing your work plan? Are your activities aligned to your broader communications strategy and district goals?

Examples of activity metrics include frequency and timeliness of newsletter distribution, hitting targets for hosting community events, or achieving desired response times when responding to inquiries. Setting activity metrics can be valuable as they force you to think through what you want to do, how often, and to what end. Having a plan and system around your communication activity enables you to track your work and make adjustments as needed. However, this metric does not give any feedback about the impact of your communications.

Reach Metrics: Reach metrics help you determine who you are currently communicating with. Identifying your current audience can help pinpoint gaps in your outreach and identify potential audience groups you may wish to target.

Examples of reach metrics include social media follow/like rates, newsletter subscription rates, website visits, or community forum attendance rates. As with activity metrics, these numbers on their own do not show you how effective your communications are being. But they can help you identify current audiences and areas where you may need to do additional work.

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Engagement Metrics: Engagement metrics track when and how often your audience engages with you.

Examples of engagement metrics could include number of parent questions received per month, percent of parents attending parent-teacher conferences, or number of staff members attending voluntary training events. These metrics can be very valuable in tracking how effectively you are encouraging others to reach out and participate in your district's activities.

Impact Metrics: Impact metrics help you track the effectiveness of your communications on shifting attitudes, influencing behaviors, or prompting action.

Examples of impact metrics include success of a communications campaign (a bond measure, an attendance campaign, etc.), change in attitude toward a controversial policy adoption (school closure, new curriculum, etc.), or achieving a fundraising or community giving goal. Impact metrics look at what you are trying to achieve and gauge how your communications efforts contributed toward (or didn't) that desired outcome.

For each metric that you select, you will need to establish a tracking mechanism. Some tracking is pretty simple. Other elements take time. But, as with everything in our technology-rich world, there are tools to make it simpler. Tools like Google Analytics can help you quickly and easily track email or newsletter open and click-through rates to see what's being read and what's not. Online survey tools can aggregate and sort responses to make analysis quicker and easier. And as you review the results of your tracking, you will be able to see not only if you met your targets but also what areas you may need to focus on or adjust in order to improve your impact and effectiveness.

Gathering Direct Feedback

Sometimes the best way to get feedback on how you are doing is to simply ask someone — or more precisely, a bunch of someones. Conducting audience surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews can provide valuable insight into what's working well, what could be improved, and what type of impact your communications are having.

In order to communicate effectively, we need to understand our audiences and what's important to them. Online surveys can be a wonderful tool to get feedback from a large number of people quickly and easily. An annual communications survey (separate ones by audience are generally best) can help assess what tools are being effective, how people feel about your communications efforts, and what people would like to see done differently.

However, building in time for personal conversations with stakeholders can be valuable when you have specific areas you want to improve on or concerns you want to address. Conducting a focus group or conducting individual interviews allows for a more in-depth conversation on a specific topic (boosting family engagement or improving the website user experience, for example).

As these means of gathering feedback can be time intensive, here are a few tips for making the most of your focus group or interview.

Focus on attitudes. Explore how people think about a problem. Stakeholders don't need to design your new newsletter format or select a color scheme for your website. But gathering feedback on their experiences, feelings, and challenges can help you improve the quality and impact of the communications you provide.

Have people give examples. Ask participants to share specific instances of when a communication worked particularly well. What was it that worked for them? Why did they find it effective? What was a specific message or strategy that didn't work for them or was a turnoff? Why? How could it have been better?

Ask about habits and preferences. Asking participants how they generally consume information can be illuminating. Do they access your website from their phones? How is that experience? Do they read the school flier or does it go straight in the recycling bin? Do they like getting text notifications or emails? Where do they go when they want to learn more?

Acting on Your Data

Now that you have solid quantitative and qualitative data about your communications efforts, what are you going to do about it? Asking people for feedback should indicate two things: that you care about what they have to say and that you are open to making changes.

A solid communications plan will include regular opportunities for review and revision. Take the time to look over your analytics, survey data, and other metrics and make a plan for improvement. And of course, make sure to communicate those changes back to the audience you had gathered feedback from. Showing people that you listened and changed based on their concerns builds credibility, trust and increases your chances for effective two-way communication down the line.

Additional Resources:

- **Measuring Communications: 4 Simple Metrics Internal Comms Should be Monitoring**
www.contactmonkey.com/blog/measure-communications
- Measuring the Success of Your Communications Strategy
www.thenonproffitimes.com/management-tips/measuring-the-success-of-your-communications-strategy

Contributed by Crystal Greene, communications consultant

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Finding the right people for the team

Your communication program is only as effective as the people on the team. Whether you are a manager who is responsible for filling important communications positions or a member of the larger interviewing team, it is helpful to brush up on best hiring practices to find the best talent for your district.

Have a clear understanding of the position

First, understand the job description. If your colleagues think public relations is about “spin,” it may be time for a refresher course to understand what a professional communicator does and why your district needs one. Defined by the Public Relations Society of America, “public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” www.prsa.org/all-about-pr

The National School Public Relations Association further defines school public relations:

“Educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive two-way communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support.” www.nspr.org/getting_started

If your district hasn’t had a formal communications program before, it is helpful to define communications objectives and develop a school board policy in support of the program before recruiting a communications professional. This definition will help guide hiring decisions and serve as a useful reminder of the school board’s goals for both the new public relations professional and her colleagues on the leadership team.

The policy should emphasize two-way communications and include objectives for the program such as keeping the public informed about policies and programs and specific functions such as serving as a liaison between the district and the media.

The policy can be detailed and specific but must be feasible for the proposed staff resources. If the communications program is new to the district, it may start with a one-person department. Reasonable expectations will take into account the amount each communications function and initiative will take. It is also important to note that the program is coordinated by the public relations professional, but board members and all staff are part of the communications team.

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WSSDA
Washington State
School Directors' Association

NSPRA's sample public relations policy begins by defining these team expectations:

“The Board of Directors believes it is the responsibility of each Board member, as well as each employee of the District, to actively pursue a two-way communications program that highlights the educational experiences in the city's public schools and promotes effective school/home/community partnerships.

The Board recognizes that citizens have a right to know what is occurring in their public school system; that Board members and all school administrators have an obligation to see that all publics are kept systematically and adequately informed; and that the District will benefit from seeing that citizens get all information, good and bad, directly from the system itself.” www.nspra.org/getting_started

Find good candidates

Before posting a position, districts must define their specific public relations needs and wants. A general P.R. job description may fit your district's particular needs, or you may want to prioritize your goals to hire for a specific skill set.

Typical public relations functions could include marketing, project management, public engagement and community relations, financial communications, media relations, social media, survey data analysis, crisis communications or finance levy campaign management. Communicators can be generalists or specialists. The best candidates cover most of these standard bases but may bring specific skills for your district's particular needs.

Most communications professionals also have a combination of strategic and technical skills. They must be able to think strategically to develop communication goals and objectives and have the technical skills to be able to implement tactics to reach them. Important technical skills include news writing and editing, basic survey techniques, website management, desktop publishing for digital and print publications, graphic design, social media, photography and videography.

It may be a challenge to find a candidate who has high-level skills in all of these areas and is a strategic communicator. If the position is new to the district, the program may start at an entry-level salary, which means that the focus is more likely on the technical skills to create a presence on the web or on social media or create materials. This task-based work will still help the district build community connections and increase the visibility of district programs and operations. As the program grows, the need for a strategic communicator will increase and can evolve later

Communicating clearly

Good communication skills consistently rank among the most sought after work skills in surveys of employers. The ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, is obviously at the top of the list in an actual communications position. Be sure to verify this skillset during your hiring process.

Considered non-negotiable, writing is the basis for all of the work in a communications office. You can't implement the strategy if you can't express it clearly. Seek proof of clear, fast writing by asking for writing samples, checking references and giving a writing test to candidates in the final round. Provide a scenario and ask for samples for a variety of media and audiences.

Also consider whether your communications professional will be the spokesperson for the district. Will the superintendent or other administrator fill that role, or will you shift the responsibility for public speaking to the new hire? Verify that they can project confidence and trust and represent the district with a professional image and articulate response.

Sample job descriptions

To help you craft a job description for a new communications position, review samples for four positions on the NSPRA website:

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

www.nspr.org/files/JobDescription1.pdf

Director of Communications and Community Engagement

www.nspr.org/files/JobDescription2.pdf

Executive Director of Communications and Strategic Planning

www.nspr.org/files/JobDescription3.pdf

Executive Director of Community Relations

www.nspr.org/files/JobDescription4.pdf

Resources

Getting Started: PR Tools

www.nspr.org/getting_started

Communication E-Kit for Superintendents

www.nspr.org/communication-e-kit-superintendents

All About Public Relations

www.prsa.org/all-about-pr/

Contributed by Jay Remy, communications consultant

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FOR FAMILIES



Immunizing Kids Against Disease



**March
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.

Every year, children die from diseases that could be prevented through immunizations. In recent years, rates of non-vaccination are going up due to fears about vaccine safety or simple forgetfulness. Health experts want parents to know that today's vaccines are rigorously tested for safety, and getting children vaccinated will protect their children and people in vulnerable populations who can't be vaccinated because of age or illness.

State requirements

All states require immunizations for students who attend public schools. Immunization mandates began in the 1800s with the development and success of a vaccine for smallpox. Since that time, courts have weighed in repeatedly on questions about individual liberties versus public health, and they have upheld requirements for vaccinations that contribute to the community's health and wellbeing.

Exemptions exist and vary by state based on philosophical, religious and/or medical objections. See a list of vaccine requirements for each state at www.nvic.org/Vaccine-Laws/state-vaccine-requirements.aspx

Opposition to vaccines

Some parents oppose vaccinations based on safety fears. One widespread fear is that vaccines cause autism. This worry grew out of a now debunked study from 1998. The connection has been disproven in multiple follow-up scientific studies, and the original study is considered a fraud or a hoax by many in the medical community. See the following links for more information:

- **Do Vaccines Cause Autism?**

www.webmd.com/brain/autism/do-vaccines-cause-autism#1.

- **Autism/MMR Vaccine Study Faked: FAQ**

www.webmd.com/brain/autism/news/20110105/bmj-wakefield-autism-faq#1

- **Retracted autism study an 'elaborate fraud,' British journal finds**

www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/01/05/autism.vaccines/index.html

Current health risk: Measles

Immunizations have eradicated smallpox and have made gains in eradicating many others, including measles, polio, mumps and rubella. Now, as more parents choose not to vaccinate, some diseases are making a comeback. The current measles outbreak in several states is a good example. "Less than 20 years ago, health experts thought it was only a matter of time before measles was completely eradicated in the United States. But over the past 15 years, the disease has gained a new

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foothold as more parents choose not to vaccinate their children. www.webmd.com/children/vaccines/news/20171003/measles-making-a-comeback-in-the-united-states#1

So far this year, nine states have reported cases of measles. Outbreaks in Oregon and Washington have tallied 37 cases, the highest number since 1996. New York reported 209 cases since October.

Measles is a contagious and deadly disease that spreads through air via coughing and sneezing. It kills one or two children out of every 1,000 children who get it. Unvaccinated children in communities with outbreaks are excluded from public schools as a precaution, sometimes for months. Read more in the CDC measles fact sheet for parents, <http://bit.ly/2D9r9dt>.

Five important reasons to vaccinate your child

From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.vaccines.gov/getting_for_parents/five_reasons/index.html

- 1 Immunizations can save your child's life.** Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction because of effective vaccines.
- 2. Vaccination is very safe and effective.** Vaccines are only given to children after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Vaccines will involve some discomfort and may cause pain, redness, or tenderness at the site of injection, but this is minimal compared to the diseases these vaccines prevent. Serious side effects, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare.
- 3. Immunization protects others you care about.** Children in the U.S. still get vaccine-preventable diseases. Since 2010, there have been between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough each year in the United States and about 10 to 20 babies, many of which were too young to be fully vaccinated, died each year. While some babies are too young to be protected by vaccination, others may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia, or other reasons. To help keep them safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized.
- 4. Immunizations can save your family time and money.** A child with a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at schools or child care facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care.
- 5. Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Your children don't have to get smallpox shots anymore because the disease no longer exists. By vaccinating children against rubella (German measles), the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their fetus or newborn has been dramatically decreased, and birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the United States. If we continue vaccinating, some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm children in the future.