

May 2019

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

- **Do you have a key communicator network?**

Personal communication is still the most effective way to reach people. Does your communication plan include strategies such as a diverse key communicator networks that provide for in-person updates and word-of-mouth messages? Read why your district needs one and how to get started.

- **Ideas for incorporating student input into decision-making processes**

Decision-making processes benefit from having a wide range of opinions. When you are reaching out to your audiences for input, be sure to seek out students. These important stakeholders can add a new voice to your process and help strengthen your results.

- **Increase community confidence in your school safety efforts**

Schools can't function effectively when safety is a constant preoccupation. School leaders have two challenges: the first is to ensure student safety, and the second is to share their school safety efforts and improve partnerships that increase confidence that schools are safe.

Sample graduation speech and program

Read sample graduation speeches to help inspire you to help you write your commencement address for your graduation ceremony. An outline of a commencement ceremony is also included for reference.

- **Schools take on responsibilities for sharing their own news**

Media scrutiny — and reporting — of schools has diminished with the reduction of reporters in local media outlets. Don't let your stories go untold. Read tips for helping your schools be their own news outlets.

- **Insights for Parents: Tips to motivate a "lazy" child**

Some children are naturally motivated to do their work and achieve at their highest levels. Others must learn good habits for action and follow through and, often, they need to know the reason for taking action. Learn about the two types of motivation to help your child do his best work.

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Do you have a key communicator network?

Forward-thinking communicators stay current on new technologies and look to social media for effective, targeted outreach. But sometimes it is helpful to go back to basics and remember that personal contact is the most effective communication method when building support for schools. People talk to people, and those people talk to other people, and so on. A key communicator program help districts harness those conversations to share and receive information from a variety of sources.

What is a key communicator program?

A key communicator network is an organized network of people who represent all segments of your community. It is made up of parents, students, business representatives and community members who care about schools. They are respected and they have influence within their networks. Key communicators agree to attend regular key communicator meetings and receive email updates to share with their community.

A key communicator network allows a school district to get accurate news out to the staff and community quickly and provides third-party credibility by sharing information from respected community members, rather than just district staff. Research shows that people believe their friends and neighbors more than they believe official sources of information about a product or a service.

The aim of a key communicator network is to build partnerships and enhance efforts to create two-way communications. Key communicators share information with their networks from the district and bring back opinions and questions from their contacts.

Who are key communicators?

Key communicators are adults and students who talk to and are believed by many people in the community. Key communicators represent the many different demographic segments of the community as well as the various segments of the school district staff. They may or may not be in positions of authority or officially-recognized leaders, but they have earned respect in their communities and they are part of a larger network. They are the people others ask, “What do you think about...?”

These opinion leaders have an interest in schools. Critics should definitely be invited to be part of this network. In a group of 10 people, one or two critics usually add a needed bit of credibility. Experience has shown that after involvement in a key communicator process, critics frequently become supporters.

Starting a new key communicator program

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A good time to start a key communicator system is in the fall. While key communicators are most helpful in a time of trouble or turmoil, you need to establish mutual trust and credibility before depending on them to call when they hear a rumor or to set someone straight who is spreading misinformation about the schools.

Once the key communicators are identified, it is critical to communicate with them regularly on a personal, one-to-one basis. Their calls, text messages and e-mails to school officials should be returned immediately, and their requests for information answered promptly. If they are expected to share good news about the schools, they must have that information in a timely and understandable fashion. In addition, school officials should contact key communicators whenever there is a need to get information out quickly in order to counteract rumors or to defuse a potential crisis

Key communicators should, in turn, contact school officials when they hear rumblings, rumors, questions or ideas from people in the community. They provide a quick, informal reading of the pulse of the community when a major decision must be made or when a sensitive issue is about to erupt.

Tips to start your key communicator program

Identify potential members

Setting up a new key communicator program involves inviting specific people who represent all demographics in the community and specific people who have noteworthy influence. Bring together a small group of trusted staff and community members who know your district. Ask them to brainstorm a list of influential people throughout the community. Remember that opinion leaders are determined by “people power” not “position power.” While the bank president may be an opinion leader, so might the hairdresser, bartender or supermarket checkout clerk. Ask them to survey their friends and neighbors for the names and addresses of people they feel fit this description.

Tell them to give those names and addresses to your key communicator organizer who will combine the lists and determine the names that appear most often. These are the people who will become the nucleus of your key communicator system. Study the list of names to be sure that identifiable groups are represented. Students and employees are key sources of information about schools, so be sure that the key communicators from within the schools are part of this list. In addition, analyze each key communicator in terms of district or specific school or area impact.

Send invitations

Send a personalized letter to each person on the list to explain the concept and point out how he or she can assist the district. Assure them it will not require an extensive time commitment. Point out that you are not asking them to do anything that they aren’t already doing but that you want to be sure they know some important information about the schools.

Follow up

Follow up with a personal phone call. Letters alone attract only about half of those invited to meetings. A call by the superintendent or a school board member will usually generate a larger turnout.

Plan the meeting

Hold the meeting at a school or in the district office. Keep the agenda and the tone informal. Explain the key communicator concept and illustrate how it might work by sharing specific examples of things that have happened in your district. Try a lunch meeting. These are busy

people, but they do have to take time for lunch. Don't structure the group or appoint a chairperson or committees.

Clarify the purpose

Emphasize that the key communicator program is built on two-way communications. You will keep them informed about what's going on, and you want them to tell you about rumblings in the community, questions that many people seem to be asking, or rumors that are flying.

Be responsive

Keep them informed. Send them monthly e-mails, background reports, school board agendas and minutes — anything that will help them help you. Return their calls promptly. Nothing will turn off a key communicator more quickly than not getting your attention when they have something to report or a question that needs answering.

Assess the program

As the year progresses, track your contacts with key communicators to help you evaluate the program. Periodically review the list of key communicators to make sure it continues to represent the community. Ask key communicators for their assessment of the program. Send key communicators an annual, personal thank you letter for being part of the network.

Sample Key Communicator invitation letter

Dear (Community Member),

There is nothing more important to the future of our community than the education of our young people. We'd like to ask you for your help. The school board and I are inviting you to be part of a very important network of opinion leaders that we are organizing this fall. It won't take much of your time – just one hour for a luncheon, prepared by our cafeteria staff, on (date) at (time and place).

This Key Communicator Network will give us an opportunity to share information with you on a regular basis about what's happening in our schools and, most importantly, allow you to communicate directly with me. We are asking you to receive a monthly e-mail with information about your schools. In return, I am asking you to share that information with friends and family and to call, e-mail or text me any time you have or hear questions or concerns about our schools.

I hope you will be part of our key communicator group. (Name) from my office will be calling you soon to find out if you can join us on (date).

Thank you for your time and interest in our schools and our community's youth.

Sincerely
(Name)
Superintendent

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Ideas for incorporating student input into decision-making processes

School districts often include a range of stakeholders when they are considering important decisions, such as creating a new strategic plan. They invite representatives from the business community, local colleges, faith community, staff and others. But often they forget a critically important stakeholder — students.

Students bring a different perspective to discussions. They are highly invested in many decisions that directly impact their learning or activities. Including students at the front end of the decision-making process can positively affect the success of a district's programs and policies.

Still, districts sometimes are wary of giving students a seat at the table. They worry that the topics are too complicated for students to fully understand or that students may be too immature or short-sighted to make a worthwhile contribution.

Those that do include the student voice find student contributions to be enlightening and valuable. Gretchen Brion-Meisels, a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, says that when schools find ways to partner with students “as stakeholders in their own learning,” they end up creating programs and policies that are more effective at meeting the schools' own goals for supporting young people.

Listening to students “doesn't mean unilaterally considering their perspective,” Brion-Meisels says. “It means recognizing that young people have a perspective on the world that adults can't share, and that their perspective should be welcomed alongside the wisdom that adult perspectives bring.”

Brion-Meisels offers five ways schools can integrate student voices:

- **Regularly solicit student feedback.** Use surveys and other research methods to routinely gather data or ask students how they feel about their classes and for suggestions on school policies, culture and climate.
- **Engage students in studying and assessing their school.** In addition to asking students for feedback, schools can train students to create their own research questions and use observations and feedback from peers to draw conclusions about what's going right, what could be improved, and how to help.
- **Include authentic student representation on leadership teams.** Principals should leave space for students on school leadership teams, improvement teams, or equity and diversity teams. In meetings, participants should treat students as full members of the team, not just observers.
- **Invite students to any discussion related to their own learning.** Individual students need to be included in parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, student sup-

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- port meetings, discipline hearings — any discussion in which they are the main topic.
- **Consider young people as stakeholders and partners in their schools.** When school leaders set new goals or make a major decision, they should expect students to contribute.

The National Parent Teacher Association believes schools should actively look for ways to incorporate student representation because it's good both for the schools and the students. The benefits include:

Academic achievement — Meaningfully involving students on school boards helps to engage students, which raises academic achievement.

Point of view — School boards and districts can benefit from the opinions, knowledge, ideas and experiences of students.

Real learning — Engaging students on school boards may be one of the most powerful ways to teach them about democracy in society.

Many districts include a student representative on the School Board. The student typically is elected or appointed to serve a term that extends through the school year. Although student representatives usually do not have voting privileges, they do fully participate in board discussions and offer opinions on matters being voted upon. They also are a conduit to share information about the board and its action with other students.

Another effective tool at the high school level is creating a principal's advisory council, composed of a cross section of students representing each grade level and other interests, such as athletics, music, vocational classes. These advisory councils usually meet once a month to discuss topics of interest or concern. These could range from the type of food offered on the lunch menu to school improvement and curriculum concerns. The most effective councils find ways to attract not only the outgoing, higher-achieving students but those who typically don't get involved and who may even feel disengaged from school.

Some schools include students on interview panels for hiring new teachers. Some districts include a student representative on the budget committee. Some make it a practice to include a student representative on every major district committee. All are ways to not only engage students in the decision-making process, but equip them with leadership skills and strategies they can use in the future.

Whatever the avenue, the key is to provide opportunities for meaningful student involvement, says Adam Fletcher, who founded SoundOut, a nonprofit organization that works with schools to increase student voice.

"Students have all this voice already," he says. "It's a matter of whether adults want to hear it." www.adamfletcher.net/category/soundout

Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant

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Increase community confidence in your school safety efforts

Keeping students safe at school is one of the most important priorities in any school district. School safety experts plan for and mitigate against everything from environmental risks like air quality and water issues to stranger danger and physical threats from violent behavior.

School shootings are high-profile examples of the tragedies that put student safety at risk. Although they are only rare occurrences, they are terrifying and tragic and they dominate the public perception of school safety. These are the types of threats that can keep school leaders awake at night and have parents questioning whether to send their children to class for the day.

Schools can't function effectively when safety is a constant preoccupation. School leaders have two challenges: the first is to ensure student safety, and the second is to share their school safety efforts and improve partnerships that increase confidence that schools are safe.

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Planning for safety

Districts have many resources to assist with safety plans and threat assessment. State departments of education, school board associations, administrator groups and public safety experts can offer guidance, sample plans, assessments and consultant services. Some online resources include:

Student Threat Assessment

www.studentthreatassessment.org

John Van Dreal is a school psychologist and school safety and threat assessment expert. He has developed a threat assessment system, and he provides trainings for school staff, community agencies and law enforcement officers.

National Association of Elementary School Principals: School Safety Resources

www.naesp.org/school-safety-resources

These helpful articles, websites, and checklists will help you guide your school community through the prevention, management, and aftermath of safety issues.

National Conference of State Legislatures: School Safety Overview and Legislative Tracking

www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-safety.aspx

A new resource by the National Conference of State Legislatures addressing state school safety laws — both current and proposed. The site includes an interactive graphic for school safety legislation and additional resources.

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The important thing is to have a safety plan and share that you have a safety plan, but sharing all of the details of your plan is not recommended. Local law enforcement and public safety officers can review the plan — and should be an integral part of developing it. They may have guidance on which specifics you should not share, such as building aerial photos or blueprints.

Partner with your community

It is a challenge to understand and prepare for all of the potential risks to students when they come through the school doors, but threats to physical safety from others require constant vigilance and strong partnerships from public safety agencies, community members, parents, staff and students. After your safety plan has been developed, reviewed and tested, the communication plan and crisis communication plan should be developed to support it. This, too, should have input and buy-in from all partners.

“The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has shown that violence in our schools and communities is not a school problem or a community problem — it is both. While it is important to help principals address the immediate safety needs in schools — like installing the deadbolt on the classroom doors, or fixing the outside lock on the gymnasium door — principals have and are taking action to make schools safer than ever before. A principal’s first responsibility is to foster a safe, orderly, warm, and inviting environment. To be effective, schools must be able to provide intervention and supports for students and families, and draw upon the collective resources of the entire learning community.”

*Gail Connelly, Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals
www.naesp.org/communicator-january-2013/student-safety-principal-s-first-priority*

Be sure to plan for trainings and develop specific communications for each audience that will be affected by or play a role in your safety plan. This includes communicating with administrators, teachers, support staff, parent clubs and extracurricular program staff.

Tell your community about your safety efforts, but don’t tell them everything.

Public safety officials should review your communication plans. This is an area where full transparency in communications is not advised. Posting your safety plan is a good idea, but elements that include specifics about your responses or your school buildings, such as blueprints, might not be. A law enforcement perspective may be helpful.

Be sure to have clear strategies outlined in your crisis communication plans as well. Define protocol for sharing information on social media that considers the safety of students and their parents who may try to race to the school in the early stages of an incident. Try to clarify when and what you will share at each stage of an event or possible event to prevent early or widespread panic that could create additional safety hazards.

Tip lines encourage threat reporting

Prevention is the key to school safety. Do you have a mechanism for reporting safety concerns? Many safety experts say that vigilant students and community members are key to preventing safety threats and school violence. Based on research that shows school shooters often leak their intentions beforehand, early reporting is one of the most effective ways to keep schools safe. Students often do not want to publicly report their concerns about fellow students, but will report anonymously. For example, Pennsylvania’s new tip line system has received thousands of reports in just the first month of operation (Education Week, <http://bit.ly/2IaRD2p>)

Many states have implemented optional or required tip line systems for schools. “At least 19 states now have systems to encourage reporting of school safety concerns and at least eight others are developing them. Some states that have had tip lines for a while say they have helped prevent real threats.” PBS News Hour, <http://bit.ly/2IaRD2p>

These reporting systems have proven to be effective threat prevention tools if people know about them. They should be part of school safety communication planning to ensure that students and parents know what they are and how to use them.

Contributed by Jay Remy, communications consultant

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Tips for your graduation speech and program

Another year is wrapping up, and graduation is around the corner. Another class of students will parade across the stage at commencement to receive their diplomas and recognition for years of dedication and diligence.

For many, it wasn't an easy journey, and the ceremony marks one of the most significant milestones of their lives to date and for many years to come. For others, it is a brief stop on a much longer journey toward their academic goals.

All students deserve to be celebrated and inspired. Graduation is a solemn and jubilant event for both the students and all of the people who supported them along the way.

An inspiring speech is an appropriate and expected part of the ceremony. Students may even contain their excitement long enough to listen to the words of wisdom from the principal, superintendent or other dignitary. If not, schools can consider posting the speech in written form or, better yet, as a video on their website for future reference and encouragement.

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Sample speeches

Schools are unique and speeches should be heartfelt. Original speeches are best. Tailor your words to fit the student body you have come to know over the last four years. To help you get started with your graduation speech, review excellent examples of speeches on the internet that can serve as a muse for a speech that will touch your audience and send them off with best wishes. Here are a few that may inspire:

Darien High School Graduation Speech by Principal Ellen Dunn

<https://darienite.com/dhs-graduation-speech-principal-ellen-dunn-11979>

Wellesley High School Graduation Speech by English Teacher David McCullough

“You’re not special.”

<https://thewellesleyreport.com/2012/06/wellesley-high-grads-told-youre-not-special>

Seven Motivational Graduation Speeches that will Inspire You

Speeches include university graduation speeches by David Foster Wallace, Ellen DeGeneres, Charlie Munger, Michelle Obama, Jim Carrey, J.K. Rowling, and Bono.

www.keepinspiring.me/7-motivational-graduation-speeches-that-will-inspire-you

Speech writing tips

Start with welcomes and introductions. Be sure to recognize special dignitaries such as school board members, public officials and notable alumni.

Recognize special accomplishments. Highlight awards, total number of college credits earned in high school, scholarships or noteworthy post-graduation plans. Remind students that they are a part of this school community, and they will always share this connection to their fellow graduates. Keep the focus on this graduation class rather than the accomplishments of previous classes.

Use personal anecdotes. Share bits of wisdom that you have learned and connect it to advice for your graduates. Keep advice simple but take the opportunity to remind students about universal life lessons that will help them be successful in their work goals and as a part of a larger community.

Keep it brief. There is a lot going on during this ceremony, and students will be eager to celebrate at graduation parties. Chances are that students will not be fully engaged for all speakers. Family members may be sitting in the rain if your event is outdoors or on uncomfortable chairs if it is inside. Be as entertaining and concise as possible, and keep things moving.

Sample graduation program

The following graduation program is an example of a comprehensive high school graduation ceremony program

**McKay High School Graduation
June 8, 2018
8:00 PM, Oregon State Fairgrounds Pavilion**

PROCESSIONAL.....McKay Wind Ensemble

(Audience remain seated during processional)

Once the graduates have marched in, Rob (principal) will quiet the crowd and have them stand for the National Anthem.

WELCOME:

Rob: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of Salem-Keizer School District, the Salem-Keizer School Board and our faculty, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the McKay High School Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2018.

On behalf of our **(total #)** graduates this evening, I would like to thank our McKay families and community for your attendance and support this evening.

And what a class this is. Share key data highlights to celebrate this group.

Audience.... Please stand, as we honor our country with the singing of the National Anthem by our McKay High School Concert Choir.

NATIONAL ANTHEM.....McKay Concert Choir

Rob: Thank you members of the McKay Concert Choir and Mr. Sepulveda. Graduates you may be seated.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

ROB: Tonight we are honored to have several special guests participating with us in tonight's commencement activities.

First... I would like to present to you School Board Marty Hayen, Director of High Schools Larry Ramirez and Linda Myers, Director of Strategic Initiatives.

Also, please welcome the McKay High School Administrators who are supporting tonight's program:

1. Ranae Quiring
2. David Wood
3. Jerimy Kelley
4. Pat Schrader
5. Dale Pedersen

Finally, I would like to personally acknowledge and thank the tremendous efforts of many of our McKay staff who have volunteered many hours to make this event possible for our graduates here at McKay.

RECOGNITION OF SALUTATORIAN/VALEDICTORIAN:

ROB: At this time, I would like to invite the Salutatorians and Valedictorians to join us on stage. All these students have demonstrated an impressive dedication to their academics and all have made us tremendously proud.

Our **Salutatorians** are students who have maintained a 3.9 grade point average through 8 semesters of course work.

Our **Valedictorians** are students who have maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average through 8 semesters of course work.

It is my honor to present:

(List salutatorians and their bios, and valedictorians and their bios)

Thank you, students, for your effort and dedication to learning. Congratulations on your achievements. Students, you may be seated.

SENIOR CLASS SPEAKER:

ROB: Members of the graduating class have been selected as class speakers. Please welcome (Class Speaker)

MUSICAL SELECTION.....McKay Concert Choir

ROB: Thank you (Student Name). Please enjoy a musical selection by the McKay Concert Choir.

Song ends.... Thank you members of the Concert Choir and Mr. Sepulveda.

SENIOR CLASS SPEAKER:

ROB: Please welcome (Class Speaker 2)

PRESENTATION OF GRADUATES:

ROB: We are now at the part of the evening we have all been waiting for, the recognition of our graduates....

As principal of McKay High School, I am proud to announce that the students before you have met or exceeded all requirements of the Salem-Keizer School District and the State of Oregon to receive a high school diploma.

Please hold your applause until all of the graduates have crossed the state so that the audience members can hear the names of each graduate. Graduates please come forward to receive your diplomas.

(HAND OUT DIPLOMAS)

PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS

ROB: On behalf of the McKay staff, our McKay community and Salem-Keizer School District, congratulations Class of 2018! We are proud of your accomplishments. We thank you for your leadership and commitment to success at McKay. We wish you the best as you continue your education, transition into your careers and become contributing members of our society. Remember.... You are forever a Royal Scot!

Parents and families.... Following the presentation of graduates, we will be doing a recessional. Please keep the recessional area clear and please respect the requests of McKay staff members who are keeping the area clear. You are welcome to meet your graduate near the entrance or down on the main floor once they have completed their recessional. Thanks for your cooperation.

Class of 2018, please stand. Please move your tassels from left to right.

Ladies, gentlemen and honored guests, please stand and join me in congratulating the McKay High School graduating class of 2018!

(Students throw hats and cheer)

RECESSIONAL

Contributed by Rob Schoepper, Principal, McKay High School, Salem, Ore.

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Schools take on responsibilities for sharing their own news

The disruption of the traditional news media has created challenges and opportunities for school districts.

Newspapers trimmed their newsroom staffs by 45 percent during 2008-2017, according to the Pew Research Center. And newspapers are not alone. In one week early this year, an estimated 1,000 U.S. journalists lost their jobs across traditional and online media.

That is bad news all around.

Fewer journalists equates to fewer reporters covering schools and education issues on a regular basis so they develop understanding, context and expertise. More stories will go untold or be assigned to journalists who lack that background.

The journalists, of course, will do their best regardless of the obstacles in their way — just as people in any profession, including education, do their best on a daily basis. But the public relies on local news coverage to keep them informed on community issues. That decline in education coverage shifts the burden to school districts to become better at telling their story.

School districts as news outlets

For some administrators and school communicators, this might be uncomfortable because it requires districts to shift from a traditional public-relations orientation to a news-gathering orientation. The difference? Viewing developments through a neutral lens and making decisions based on what the public wants to know and should know.

Your goals are to inform and to build and sustain credibility.

For example, instead of issuing a press release lauding the Hughesisms School District for launching an exciting new career-technical education program, write it as a news story that includes the good and the not-so good. Don't ignore the tradeoffs. Leave it to the readers, viewers and listeners themselves to decide whether the program is nifty or ho-hum.

This doesn't mean you have to go out of your way to find "negative" news, but you do need to be as objective as possible. If CTE enrollment is a concern, deal with it head-on in your news coverage. If that terrific new administrator of the CTE program suddenly quits, inform the public now instead of waiting until a replacement is hired. Think of what parents, taxpayers, staff and students want to know.

Implemented diligently over time, this expanded approach to coverage will enhance the

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district's reputation and stop unfounded rumors — well, at least some. The only way to beat social media is to be ahead of it.

Follow the ADCs

As a longtime newsroom trainer and adjunct instructor, I preached that journalistic writing should follow this hierarchy of importance:

1. Accuracy — Accuracy always must be No. 1. Accuracy in facts, in spellings, in every detail. But accuracy need not equate to delay. If you can't confirm something, don't say it. Go with what you can confirm.

2. Deadline — The societal concept of deadline has expanded ferociously. If you're slow to release news, social media will fill the gaps, which often complicates your life. Anymore, think of deadline as a constant instead of a specific time.

Thus, coverage of an event might roll out like this: Brief social media posts, such as on Twitter, about what is happening. Longer posts with photos on Facebook or other platforms. Short video clips for social media. All the while, you're building the information for your "print" story — the one you'll post on the school website, accompany with an overall video and/or photo gallery, perhaps include in a newsletter or distribute to local media, and post on social media.

3. Clarity — People usually are surprised that I rank clarity third instead of first. But it's most important to get the story right and to get it out quickly.

However, clarity is what ensures your work is read. Think clean writing and easy-to-understand writing, not fancy writing. Above all, don't try to be cute; it rarely works — except in one's own mind.

Your stories need not be long. Too many newspaper stories are overwritten. Think of how people could most easily digest the information you're providing. In some situations, a narrative story might be most engaging. In other instances, a quick-hit list of bulleted points would be best.

Serve the remaining journalists

The new approach I'm advocating does not fully replace your traditional role in working with journalists. They still need your respectful, helpful assistance in chasing down leads, talking to people and understanding issues.

Some will be more knowledgeable than others. The trick is to be a helpful resource without being seen as hovering.

I'm a big believer in providing one- or two-page double-spaced bulleted tip sheets that explain the key details and include office, cell, social media and email information for contacting the appropriate sources in your school district. Provide it by email as well as on paper.

If you don't know where to start, start somewhere. Change is a constant in almost any industry. Journalists and school communicators alike must continually adjust.

I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Tips to motivate a “lazy” child



May 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.

Some children are naturally motivated to do their chores, achieve in school and participate in physical activities. Children who lack this motivation may seem lazy, but this behavioral issue is more complex than it seems.

People who get things done have individual motivations for taking action. Some people are naturally driven to comply, help or achieve. Others must learn good habits for action and follow through and, often, they need to know the reason for taking action.

Intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation

Two types of motivation influence human action.

Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding — performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. Essentially, the behavior itself is its own reward.

Extrinsic motivation occurs when we are motivated to perform a behavior or engage in an activity to earn a reward or avoid punishment. In this case, you engage in a behavior not because you enjoy it or because you find it satisfying, but in order to get something in return or avoid something unpleasant.

Intrinsic motivation is desirable but not always possible, and excessive external rewards can backfire and reduce motivation for an activity. External rewards are most effective if your child had no prior interest in the activity or as reinforcement or a source of feedback for meeting a goal.

Behavioral experts advise avoiding extrinsic motivators if your child already finds the activity rewarding or if the external reward makes a play activity seem like work.

Praise as an external reward

It is important to note that rewards do not have to be physical or costly. Praise and recognition of effort is often a sufficient external reward. “Researchers have found that offering positive praise and feedback when people do something better in comparison to others can improve intrinsic motivation.”

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

Tips to boost motivation

Most parents try to motivate their children, or at least try to get them to comply. Accountability and follow through are important life skills..

(Over)

The following tips for parents are from parenting expert and psychotherapist Debbie Pincus. Her first recommendation is to hold them accountable. “If you’ve ruled out learning disabilities and behavioral disorders and your child still isn’t participating in family life, and isn’t doing chores or homework, somehow you probably aren’t holding him to the line. In that case, you need to hold him accountable and provide the consequences that will guide him to the right place. You’ll get the video game once you get your homework and chores done.

Tips to inspire your kids to motivate themselves:

Don’t let your anxiety push them to get motivated. You will only motivate them to resist you or to comply to calm you down because they want you to leave them alone. It then becomes about reacting to you instead of finding some internal motivation.

Be inspiring. Understand that your kids will want to run the other way if you’re too controlling. Remember, the only thing you’ll motivate if you’re pushing your child is the motivation to resist you.

Let your child make his own choices — and face the consequences. Let your child make his own choices. When it’s a poor choice, hold him accountable by letting him face the natural consequences that come with it. If the consequence of not doing homework is that the computer is taken away, put the need to get that computer time back in his hands. If he finishes his work, he gets the time on the computer you’ve agreed upon. That will be a motivation for him in the right direction without you telling him what to do, how to do it, and lecturing him on why he should care.

What is your parenting style? Door number one is for the parent who wants to get their kids motivated and do the right thing in life: Door number two is for parents who want their kids to be self-motivated to do those things. To not only do the right thing but to want to do the right things.

In the first example, the parent achieves that goal by pushing, punishing, begging, nagging, bribing, rewarding, and cajoling. The second option is to reach the goal by asking different kinds of questions. Rather than, “Did you get your homework done?” you might say, “Why did you decide to do your homework today and not yesterday? I noticed you chose not to do geometry yesterday, but you’re doing your history homework today. What’s the difference?” Be an investigator, exploring and uncovering, helping your child discover his own motivations and sticking points.

It’s not your fault. Remember, your child’s lack of motivation is not your fault, so don’t personalize it. When you do this, you may actually contribute to underachieving by creating more resistance. Children need to learn that we don’t always need to be motivated to do the things we have to do. That’s an important lesson. Your child may hate doing his chores and try to get out of it, and that’s when you give him consequences.

You want to help your child define for himself who he is, what’s important to him and what he’s going to do to make those things happen. Our responsibility is to help our kids do that, not to do it for them.

www.empoweringparents.com/article/unmotivated-child-6-ways-get-child-going