

# **Communication Leadership**

## **Key Messaging for the Superintendent**

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# Presenter

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# Communication Leadership

- This session
- Why?
- How?
- Let's get started

# What is a key message?

- A concise set of brief comments that are memorable for the listener and can be easily recited by the person delivering the message.
- The goal of the message is to lead to a desired outcome
  - *Action, attitude change, awareness*

# What a key message is not

- A key message is not about spin.
- A key message is not a spin statement.
- A key message is not a disguise for spin.

# When to use key messages

- Responding to common inquiries (parents/staff)
- Parent newsletters
- Web site
- School board presentations
- Press releases/press inquiries
- Parent advisory committees

# Your BEST Opportunity...

- Delivering key messages in everyday conversation

# Why use key messages?

- Helps you stay on message
- Does not distract from the primary communication goal
- Supports the organization's mission
- Simple, easy to remember, repeat from memory
- Created from evidence/facts

# How to develop key messages

- Determine who will craft the message and if others will help
  - *Sometimes the leader crafts the message*
  - *Most often you will solicit involvement from internal/external sources*
- What do we know and what additional information do I need to gather?
  - *Take the time to do this right*
  - *Challenge your staff to view from multiple perspectives*

# How to develop key messages

- Is there greater context to be considered?
  - *Double-check that any program key message do not conflict with the district key message*
- Identify primary and secondary audiences
  - *Who needs to hear your message and who might benefit from hearing your message*

# How to develop key messages

- What is the desired outcome?
  - *Understanding, change in attitude, etc.*
- Write and rewrite
  - *Keep it simple to understand*
  - *Don't use acronyms and jargon*
- Practice delivering the key messages

# How to develop key messages

**The Premise**

```
graph TD; A[The Premise] --> B[The Key Message]; B --> C[Support Points  
Facts/Evidence]; B --> D[Enhancements  
Stories/Examples];
```

**The Key Message**

**Support Points  
Facts/Evidence**

**Enhancements  
Stories/Examples**

# Practice, practice, practice

- Define an issue/key points
- Essential questions
  - *Who should craft and deliver the message?*
  - *What additional information is needed?*
  - *Is there a greater context?*
  - *Who are the audiences (primary/secondary)?*
  - *What is the desired outcome?*
- Discuss and write key messages
- Practice delivering a key message



**Communications  
leadership begins with  
key messaging**

# Best Practice Tip #1

- Avoid...
  - *Jargon*
  - *Judgment and condemnation*
  - *Promises and predictions*
  - *Humor*

# Best Practice Tip #2

- Use third-party sources
  - *Distribute your key messages to committed stakeholders and gain their permission to involve them in delivery on important issues.*

# Best Practice Tip #3

- A firm foundation of facts
  - *Be sure messages are based in facts and evidence is readily available.*

# Best Practice Tip #4

- Tell me a story
  - *Using a story to illustrate your key message will leave a lasting impression and the chance to be repeated.*

# Best Practice Tip #5

- Feed the Beast
  - *When dealing with the media, don't ignore. View this as an opportunity to deliver your key messages to a wider audience.*

# Best Practice Tip #6

- Acknowledge and Bridge
  - *When presented with a challenge, acknowledge and immediately bridge to a key message.*



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