

# Developing a District Communication Plan

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All communications documents, including sample comprehensive plans and annual reports, may be found at this link:

<http://goo.gl/8qGv5s>



1994 technology still  
going strong!

## *Sage advice from the old supe:*

A curriculum mix-up -- **forgivable**

An error in the budget – **survival is probable**

A little botulism in the cafeteria – **not pretty,  
but life goes on**

Inability to effectively communicate – **get your  
résumé ready**

*It's impossible not to eavesdrop  
when you hear your district  
mentioned.*

**What do you hope to hear?**

# Expectations for today?

# Overview of today's session

- ❑ Models for planning
- ❑ Advisory teams
- ❑ Audiences
- ❑ Internal Communications
- ❑ The right communication tool
- ❑ Research
- ❑ Messages
- ❑ Project-based communication plans
- ❑ Evaluation/follow-up

# Today's work is only part of the process

- ❑ Today we frame the plan
- ❑ Take it home
- ❑ Get a date on your calendar and start
- ❑ Get others in on the plan
- ❑ Do your research
- ❑ Develop and execute your comprehensive and project-based communication plans.



# RPIE

- Research
- Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation

# Advisory Groups

- ❑ Don't work in a vacuum
- ❑ Keep it manageable
- ❑ Diverse voices (in one person)
- ❑ External participants
- ❑ Internal participants
- ❑ Make the work meaningful
- ❑ Continue to tap into the groups

# Build Your Communication Advisory Team

Keep the committee manageable.

*How?*

*Diverse voices/groups (in one  
person)*

# Determining Audiences: Internal / External

Think demographics

# When the house is on fire, tell those inside first!

- Builds trust
- “When the eagles are silent the parrots will jabber.” (Knocks down rumors )
- Your best PR team is your staff
- *Special superintendent survival note: you really want to tell your board first.*

# Communication Tools & Methods

Website    Email    Social Media  
Apps    Letters home    Publications  
Mass Media    Large groups  
Small Groups    Video    Auto-calls  
Personal calls    Direct Mail  
Billboards    Local media  
Skywriting

Cross reference audiences with communication tools and methods.

Where is your district strong?  
Where are the weak spots?

# Do your research

What information needs to be shared?

Who needs to know?

What do they need to know?

How do they want to receive the information?

Who is the messenger?



# Forms of research

*pros & cons*

- Phone
- Focus/discussion groups
- Community engagement
- Online surveys
- Individual interviews
- Coffee klatches
- Using state and national resources

# Messages

- The takeaway, master narrative, elevator pitch
- What's needed to engage people.
- Bite-sized summations that articulate:
  - what you do
  - what you stand for
  - how you are different
  - what value you bring to stakeholders.

# Messages

- Clear, concise and consistent
- Supports district mission
- Relevant and accurate: supported by data
- Compelling – Simple – Memorable

*As a school district, all of your messages must keep in mind the benefits to students*

# Developing your message

- Remember radio station “W I I - F M”
- Audience is thinking, “What’s in it for me?”
- Message should reflect their interests, not yours.
- Talk about outcomes for kids, not just inputs.
- Features tell, but benefits sell
- “I’m so excited to be here!” (So what...why?)
- Bring it back to students *almost all of the time!*

# Sidebar: Avoid Jargon

**“Pre-dawn vertical insertion”**

Parachute drop at night

**“Modular learning environment”**

Trailer

**“DCA”**

District Common Assessment (huh?)

Test all the kids take

# 30-Word Home Base (elevator pitch)

- First 30 words are absorbed by audience
- Main point + 3 supporting points
- Takes 12-15 seconds to say
- About the length of a TV sound bite
- Forms basis of your “message map”

# Sample Home Base

The City of Springfield is about providing a high quality of life for residents by using tax dollars wisely, meeting citizens' needs and hiring outstanding employees.

# Sample Home Base

Silver Dollar City creates memories worth repeating by providing fun family activities in a clean, friendly environment led by a caring staff.



# A Good Home Base?

FACS is a holistic, multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary, systems-approach that addresses complex and practical systems facing individuals, families and the environment.

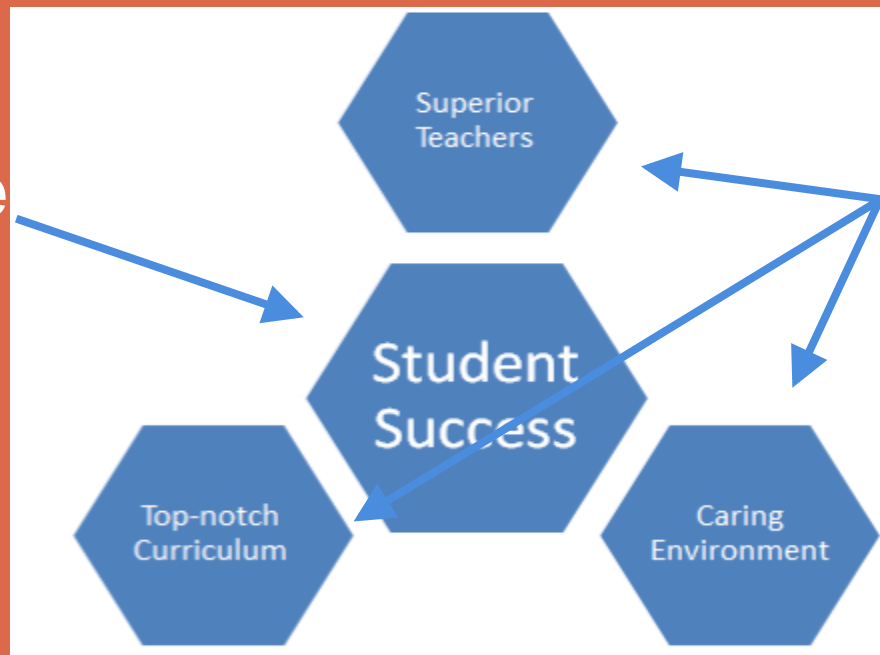
**Not a good example!**

# Sample Home Base

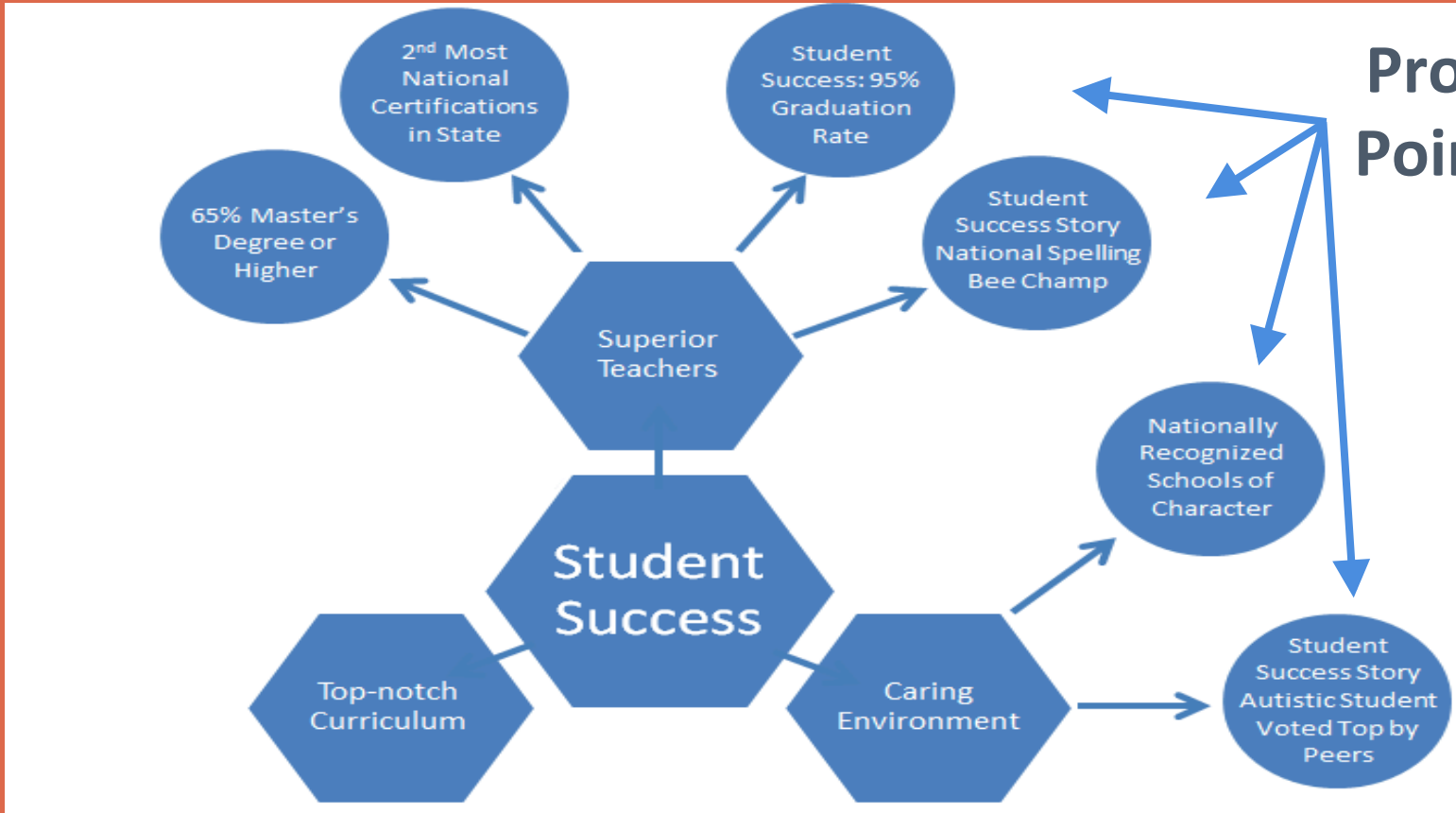
Parkway Schools help all students succeed by providing a great education with superior teachers, an outstanding curriculum and a caring environment.

# Use Home Base to Map Your Message

Home Base



Supporting Points



**Proof Points**

# What is your district's Home Base?

## The Big Picture

- Take a moment to share/discuss your district's primary message.
- Make sure the central focus is students.
- *This could be a version of your district's mission statement.*

# Project-Based Communication Plans

Determine an issue that is on the horizon that needs to be strategically addressed with multiple audiences.

*(Use the grid provided to create your plan.)*

# Evaluate

After developing and executing your communication plan... ***evaluate***. (*In fact, evaluate throughout the process!*)

It's one thing to put the message out there, it's another to know if it was heard and understood.

Always evaluate and, if needed, follow-up.

# Comprehensive communications plan

- ❑ Get with your advisory team
- ❑ Look at other districts' plans
- ❑ Determine primary audiences
- ❑ Determine primary ongoing messages
- ❑ Determine objectives, strategies and tools to reach audiences
- ❑ Determine how to measure effectiveness



# MOSPRA

MISSOURI SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

[WWW.MOSPRA.ORG](http://WWW.MOSPRA.ORG)

**MASA**  
LEAD - DEVELOP - SUPPORT

# Samples and Next Steps

- We will email you a list of websites with good comprehensive communication plans
- We'll also email you additional documents and links that will help you in the process.
- **Don't wait on this! Start the process** and begin implementing both comprehensive and project-based plans in the very near future.

# In Review

- RPIE
- Advisory teams
- Audiences: internal / external
- Internal Communications
- The right communication tool
- Research
- Message
- Project-based communication plans
- Evaluation

# A little feedback, please

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N5HXMNT>



Yep. We'll email this to you.



## Developing a Communication Plan

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Thanks to our friends for  
helping present! Join!



