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# PRincipal Communicator

Concise, practical public relations help for school leaders

*Leading Off*

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to Make Campus Communication Simple and Effective



*By Trinette Marquis, APR, author, communication professor and consultant, SchoolPRPro, Sacramento, Calif.*

As principal, you likely need to be very organized. Giving some thought to creating a simple, system-wide plan for communicating will increase the effectiveness of your communication efforts and save you a lot of time throughout the school year.

While it is tempting to try to create communication across a wide variety of methods, it can take a lot of time and attention.

Save time in this process by thinking about your target audiences and their communication preferences. For instance, do most of your families prefer an automated text, an email or a social media post to keep them updated? That information helps to guide the next part of your plan; your communication methods.

In the following article, Trinette Marquis, APR, offers tips on how to implement an effective campus communication plan through a three step process: reduce, reuse and recycle. [Read more.](#)

*Customer Service*

## Secretaries: The Key to a Customer-Friendly School



A kind, efficient secretary or administrative assistant is essential to a customer-friendly school. Secretaries and administrative assistants can be the image breaker or builder for a school. When visitors, students and their families are greeted warmly, the school is immediately seen as a friendly



families are greeted warmly, the school is immediately seen as a friendly place where children will be happy. If a secretary is slow to greet visitors, abrupt or appearing to be overworked or disorganized, the visitors may wonder if that is part of the school environment.

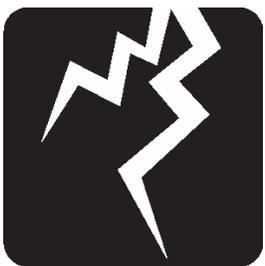
Principals can provide the following checklist to help their school secretary or administrative assistant represent the school in a positive way and leave a great first impression.

- Keep a personal school “Information Resource” guidebook handy, including all forms, calendars and procedures you need over the course of the day.
- Practice good phone etiquette. Limit personal phone calls, always use the hold button when juggling calls, and delegate. Refer calls to others or take messages for return calls during busy times.
- Alert the principal when he or she notices a trend developing from a series of requests from parents and staff.
- Arrange work by seasons, weeks and daily tasks. Make a plan and work the plan.
- Keep smiling and remain polite. A smile can melt anger nearly every time.

**Source:** NSPRA’s *Principals in the Public: Engaging Community Support*

### *Crisis Communications*

## **Planning for Severe Winter Weather Storms**



While Superintendents often make the decision to cancel, delay or hold classes during winter storms, principals should have contingency plans in place for their schools to prepare for this type of severe weather.

Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and, at times, by strong winds, ice, sleet and freezing rain. Therefore, when classes are held, principals should consider limiting outdoor activities to no more than 15 minutes and make sure students are properly clothed with coats, gloves and hats to play outdoors.

Schools should have a transportation plan in severe weather in accordance to their district’s policy. Within this transportation plan, principals can determine whether it’s safe for students to walk home — in groups and abiding by safety rules — when they live in close proximity to the school. Students who can’t walk home should have a place to stay; whether it be at school or in a different centralized location.

There should be plans in place for the possibility of students and staff being isolated at school.

Schools should always have extra batteries in stock, as well as battery-powered radios and flashlights in working order. In addition, schools should have food stored that can be prepared without an electronic or gas stove.

**Source:** NSPRA's *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools — 4th Edition*

### Best PR Activities

## Making Storytelling Happen: Create a Web of Understanding



Setting can make a difference in whether people share stories. Consider the relaxed atmosphere of a campfire that fosters respectful listening.

Although schools are more formal than a campfire, there are activities principals can use to encourage storytelling amongst their staff. To establish a conducive setting and ambience, seat your school staff in groups of six to eight participants in a circle of chairs with nothing in the middle.

Then your staff will be able to start to **create a web of understanding**. To begin this activity, give the first storyteller a ball of yarn as he or she begins a story. Remain quiet and listen respectfully as stories are told. When he or she is finished, ask the storyteller to hang onto the loose end of the yarn and toss the ball to whomever he or she wishes to be the next storyteller. After each person has a turn, a web will form, illustrating how stories tie people together in understanding.

**Source:** *The Politics of Authentic Engagement*

### Going Social

## Principal Spotlight: Weekly Facebook Live Encourages Love of Reading



A recent [Philadelphia Inquirer article](#) highlighted how a New Jersey K-2 elementary school principal, Sherry Knight, encourages a love of reading. Each week, Knight randomly selects a student to receive a copy of the book that she features on the Facebook Live. Formerly a second grade teacher, one of her goals as principal is to have students reading by the end of Kindergarten.

[The following video](#) shares an example of Knight reading *A Halloween Scare in New Jersey* by Eric James to her students during this weekly event. She engages students by posing questions about where they have visited in that state and by using different voices as she reads.

Thank you to **Edward Moore, APR**, Professor Emeritus at Rowan University (N.J.) for sharing this article. [Read the article.](#)



### ***Best Seminar Savings With Super Early-Bird Registration***

NSPRA 2020 National Seminar registration is now open. Super early-bird registration is \$665 for members and \$765 for non-members. [Register online](#) or review, complete and return the [registration flyer](#). **The super early-bird registration deadline is Feb. 28, 2020.**

We urge you to book your hotel room at the St. Louis Union Station Hotel as soon as you can. Room rates at the St. Louis Union Station Hotel are \$190 for single occupancy and double occupancy. [Learn more on our website](#). **The deadline to book a hotel room is June 8, 2020.**



“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.”

—Chinese Proverb

“When people talk, listen completely.”

—Ernest Hemingway

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.”

—Sydney J. Harris

*Days to Celebrate*





- **Feb. 1–29:**  
**National African American History Month**  
[Learn ways to recognize this month.](#)
- **Feb. 1–29:**  
**National Children’s Dental Health Month**  
Visit the [American Dental Association website](#) for resources.
- **Feb. 2:**  
**Groundhog Day**
- **Feb. 3–7:**  
**National School Counseling Week**  
Sponsored by American School Counselor Association sponsors this week, this year’s theme will be “School Counselors: Helping Build Better Humans.” [Find activities and a promotional toolkit on their website.](#)
- **Feb. 14:**  
**Valentine’s Day**
- **Feb. 17:**  
**National PTA Founder’s Day**
- **Feb. 17:**  
**President’s Day**
- **Feb. 25:**  
**Mardi Gras**

*Good Stuff*



## Call to Action: Take The #PublicSchoolProud Pledge. Share Your Commitment to Our Nation’s Public Schools

Nine out of 10 students in America attend public schools. Public Schools Week is a national celebration to highlight the great things happening in our nation’s public schools, as well as bring attention to the critical issues facing our schools, students and educators. This initiative shows the strength and potential of public schools in a democratic society. Public Schools Week 2020 will be held February 24–28, 2020.

NSPRA is a member of the Learning First Alliance (LFA). LFA has launched the Pledge for Public Schools at [www.publicschoolproud.org](http://www.publicschoolproud.org) for educators, parents and community members to add their voice in support of public schools. [Learn more and take the pledge](#), and urge others in your school community to do the same.



## Increase Your School's Cultural Competency for Meetings

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. Here are a few tips on how principals can increase their school's cultural competency during school meetings:

- Make sure meeting venues are big enough. Many immigrant families show up with extended family members. Recognize that this is a cultural norm for many of these groups.
- Since many families bring small children, have a separate, supervised area or room specifically geared to providing activities for younger children so as not to create a distraction for important information given at these meetings.
- When sending information to parents, using phrases like "reserved or limited seating," "free events," or "refreshments provided" resonate. You could have parents fill out a registration form to attend this event as well.
- To help schedule a day and time for a meeting, understand what habits dictate daily life for your diverse communities. Think about whether it would make more sense to have a meeting during the day, as opposed to after school and work, or vice versa.

**Source:** NSPRA's *Diversity Communications Toolkit*

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