

PRincipal Communicator - August 2020

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New School Year... New *PRincipal Communicator*

Back to school means it's time to start *PRincipal Communicator*. We understand that this year will be like no other. We hope that this monthly newsletter will make it easier to share tips and resources with principals at all grade levels.

Send your building principal communication success stories and videos to editorial@nspra.org, so that we can share them with your fellow school leaders and with communication professionals throughout the year.

As always, we are here to help you along the way, so don't hesitate to contact us and connect with colleagues on [NSPRA Connect](#).

Rich Bagin, APR
NSPRA Executive Director

Leading Off

Capturing Your School's Special Moments

*By **Tove Tupper**, assistant director of communications, Highline Public Schools, Burien, Wash.*

If you pay attention to national and local headlines about public schools, you may be left with the impression that there aren't a whole lot of great things happening in our schools. Working in education, we know these headlines don't tell the whole story.



As principals, you have a front-row seat to all the special moments happening with your schools such as virtual classroom activities or the powerful ways your school is supporting students and their families during this time, such as providing meals to those in need in the community.

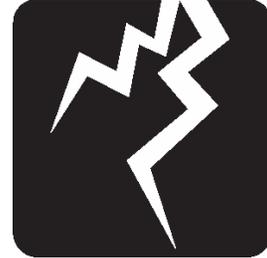
You have the power to deliver good news directly to your community — on social media, right where everyone is already gathering their news.

In this month's Leading Off article, discover five steps for sharing special moments on social media. [Read the article.](#)

Crisis Communications

Communication Protocol and Guidelines for Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in Your Schools

As you start planning your back-to-school communications, establishing protocols for if a student or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day is vital. Waterbury (Conn.) Public Schools developed a [tip sheet](#) with guidelines on what steps to take in this situation. They include:



- Immediately separate the student or staff member with COVID-19 symptoms at school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are.
- Have a designated isolation room for students who exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19, until a parent or guardian comes to pick-up the student.
- Separate the staff member from others and send them home; have the staff member consult with his or her personal physician.
- If a student or staff member is confirmed to have a case of COVID-19, contact your school's maintenance staff. Have them use the standard operating procedures of cleaning and disinfection of classrooms and the staff member's workstation.
- Have a list of contacts that need to be notified such as the local department of public health and someone on the district staff.
- Ensure the proper notifications will be made to the school community as quickly as possible via various communication methods, while maintaining confidentiality.

[Read the full tip sheet.](#)

Source: Waterbury (Conn.) Public Schools [tip sheet](#) on [NSPRA's Back-to-School Considerations webpage](#).

Instructional Models for Flexibility

As schools consider plans for reopening, the health of all educators, students and families is of primary concern. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's report, [Education Forward: Safely and Successfully Reopening Wisconsin Schools](#) outlines a few instructional models for flexibility. Below are a couple of models to consider for your schools.



Enriched Virtual Instruction Model

All students learn from the teacher four days per week (two days in-person and two days virtually). Schedules are staggered with students moving in shifts between in-person and virtual attendance using a cohort-based model.

Wednesdays are reserved for deep cleaning at the school. Activities that day can include professional development for teachers, students communicating virtually with teachers about individualized work or virtual small group work among students.

Flipped Classroom Model

The Flipped Classroom model flips the traditional relationship between class time and homework. Students learn independently via online coursework and lectures, and teachers use class time for teacher-guided practice or projects. This model enables teachers to use class time for more than delivering traditional lectures.

If instruction is in person, students may complete their independent coursework and lectures in classrooms, the library, computer labs, or other areas of the school, so they can be more socially distant from each other. If learning virtually, there can be teacher-guided practice or projects for students.

[See other model options and learn more.](#)

Source: [Education Forward: Safely and Successfully Reopening Wisconsin Schools](#) — Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on [NSPRA's Back-to-School Considerations webpage](#).

Best PR Activities

Analysis of Intent (So, Do You Mean...?)

To enhance a positive school culture, principals and their staff need to be fully present and listen deeply to each other, as well as to community members and students and their families. The following exercise helps small groups connect and individual members feel welcome and understood, while building pertinent listening skills needed when delving into more complex conversations.



During current times, this exercise can be done virtually during a staff meeting through video conferencing programs such as Zoom's breakout room feature.

Step One: Divide the participants into groups of five.

Step Two: Ask one person in each group to begin by making what he or she believes to be a true statement (e.g., I think it's hot in here).

Step Three: Allow each member of the group to respond in turn to the statement maker with a question beginning with the phrase, "So do you mean..." (e.g., so, do you mean you're uncomfortable?).

Step Four: Ask the original statement maker to respond with "yes" or "no."

Step Five: Keep going around the circle with group members asking clarifying questions until the statement maker can give five "yes" responses or until time is up. If time is up before five "yes" responses, the speaker will need to say what he or she meant. If the goal of five "yes" responses was met, move on to a new statement maker and repeat the process.

Step Six: Debrief the experience by considering these questions: What did we learn? What surprised us about this experience?

Source: *Politics of Authentic Engagement*

Staff Communications

Identify Your School's Equity Commitment

As the 2020-21 school year begins, principals should work with their staff to identify a set of focused equity commitments for their schools. These equity commitments should help students and staff stay safe, while meeting students' increased needs. The following are some questions to discuss with your staff.



- Have you engaged a diverse set of stakeholders — including students, families, educators and the broader community — to ensure that you're focusing on the school's highest priority needs?
- Are you analyzing the impact of the school's actions on students, staff and families of color to ensure you are closing racial and economic disparities and not exacerbating them?
- Is decision-making grounded in assessments of students' academic and non-academic needs to build a deep understanding of the different ways students are impacted by the COVID-19 crisis?
- Have you planned for a range of revenue levels and physical distancing possibilities with equity in mind?

Source: [An Action Guide For School Leaders](#) from the Alliance for Resource Equity on [NSPRA's Race Relations and Equity Communications Resources webpage](#)

More than 400 school communication and public relations professionals from across the United States and Canada participated in NSPRA's new virtual professional development series, NSPRA Live 2020, this summer.



During this event, participants enjoyed access to 24 live sessions, 5 live sponsor sessions and 14 on-demand presentations on a variety of school communication topics for all experience levels. If you missed out, don't worry: You can still register for access to recordings of more than 40 sessions and presentations until July 2021.

The fee for NSPRA Live 2020 for NSPRA Members is \$250 — less than \$10 per session. Register today!

PRincipal Communicator — Concise, practical public relations help for your school. Published monthly, August through May, by the National School Public Relations Association.

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