

# PRincipal Communicator - December 2020

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*Leading Off*

## **Look, Listen and LINK: Scaffolding Support Around Your Student Body Using Community Partnerships**

*By **Stephen Nichols, MBA, APR**, CEO of Communication Resources for Schools, Sacramento, Calif., and former NSPRA vice president for diversity engagement*



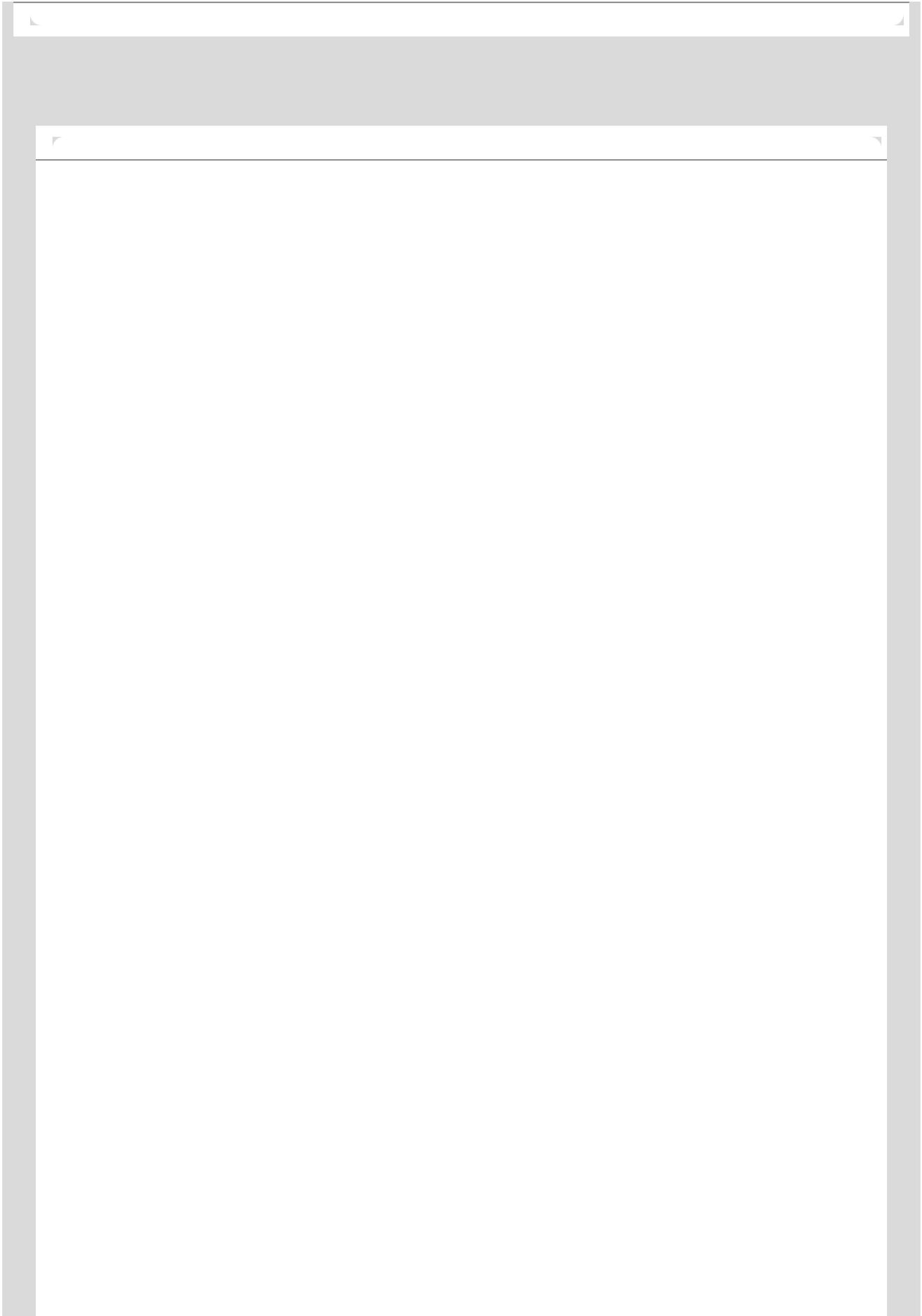
Have you ever seen a multi-story construction project up close? As the build progresses, the skeletal structure rises upward to impressive heights. As principals, careers in the construction management trades won't typically come to mind as a parallel to your profession. These careers are more alike than one might think.

Think of the building as students, and the scaffolding as the inputs you install to fortify the building until it can stand alone.

In the following article, **Stephen Nichols, MBA, APR**, provides some key ideas to enhance student success, including looking around your school community to assess potential opportunities and engaging in strategic listening to ensure you're building what's most valued in your school.

He offers four action steps for principals to facilitate support in their schools: **lead** by modeling behaviors of intentionality and collaboration, **inspire** stakeholders to demonstrate your school's mission and vision statement, **negotiate** the landscape, and **keep** it real.

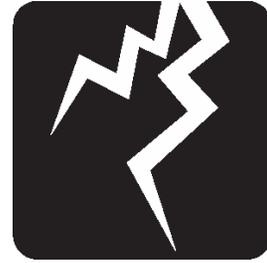
[Read the full article.](#)



## *Crisis Communications*

### **School Building Incident Management Teams**

An Incident Management Team (IMT) is an organized group of school staff trained in implementing response protocols established in the school's Emergency Operations Plan.



IMTs cannot be formed when crises unfold. Members must be in place and trained in their role long before a crisis occurs. IMT personnel varies among schools; members are generally chosen based on their skills, knowledge, experience and ability to assist during an emergency. They include administrators, teachers and support staff. The principal serves as the team leader.

Responsibilities of the IMT include:

- Adapt the district emergency operations and recovery plan for the school's needs;
- Define clear emergency response roles for all school staff;
- Conduct regular safety assessments or security audits of the school building;
- Communicate school safety precautions and procedures to parents;
- Evaluate emergency response actions and coordinate debriefing sessions with staff.

As the lead of the school IMT, principals will need to handle mass communication and media. Yet it is nearly impossible for a single principal or building administrator to manage the many aspects associated with a crisis. Therefore, they must rely on other key school personnel such as their public relations professionals to perform tasks that will ensure the safety of students and staff during a crisis.

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

## Parent Communications

### Return to Learn Forward Fact Sheet

NSPRA's [new resource webpage](#) includes items that were curated for NSPRA members to aid in the development of strategic communication plans and the identification of strategies and tactics related to a return to in-person learning.



This page includes a [Return to Learn Forward fact sheet](#) from Williamsburg-James County Public Schools in Virginia. The way this information from the fact sheet was displayed on their website and as a flyer could be done similarly in your own school.

The fact sheet includes advice such as:

- Know when instruction will take place virtually or in person;
- Have students practice wearing their masks;
- Charge devices like laptops and tablets; and
- Discuss how students need to bring their own school supplies, including their own water bottle.

The advice is complemented with graphics. The district also included a [flyer PDF version](#) of this fact sheet.

Thank you to **Eileen Cox**, the district's senior director of communications and engagement, for sharing the district's [Return to Learn Forward webpage](#) on [NSPRA Connect](#) at the start of the 2020–21 school year.

A flyer with a white background and blue accents. At the top, it says "RETURN TO LEARN: FORWARD WJCC SCHOOLS" with "FORWARD" in large, bold, blue letters. Below that is a blue banner with white text: "Getting Ready for Face-to-Face Learning". The flyer is divided into three sections. The first section is titled "KNOW YOUR SCHEDULE" and includes an icon of three students at desks. The second section is titled "PRACTICE WEARING YOUR MASK" and includes an icon of a yellow smiley face wearing a white mask. The third section is titled "GET CHARGED UP!" and includes an icon of a laptop. Each section contains text providing specific instructions for students.

**RETURN TO LEARN:  
FORWARD  
WJCC SCHOOLS**

**Getting Ready for  
Face-to-Face Learning**

**KNOW YOUR SCHEDULE**  
Students in grades K-3 will participate in on-site two days a week. Students whose last names start with letters A-L will be in school buildings on Mondays and Tuesday. Students whose last names begin with M-Z will be on-site Wednesdays and Thursdays. The remaining days each week will be remote/asynchronous learning days. Students must complete assigned work in order to be counted present for attendance.

**PRACTICE WEARING YOUR MASK**  
Everyone must wear a mask on the bus and while at school, except when eating or at recess. Please make sure your child has a mask and has practiced wearing it for extended periods of time.

**GET CHARGED UP!**  
Students should carry their fully-charged WJCC Schools-issued tablet or laptop to and from school each day. Be sure to charge devices at home nightly so students are ready to learn. Continue using

## Customer Service

### Customer Service-Friendly Points of Contact Assessment

To ensure that your school is customer friendly, principals should make a list of every point of contact with the school and assess if each is customer friendly. The goal is to increase the flow of communication. When points of communication in your school are positive and productive, people will use them more frequently.



Include the following in your assessment:

**Phones:** Are phones answered promptly and politely? Are employees who routinely answer phones informed about what is going on in the school? Is the information to frequently asked questions readily available?

**School Website:** Is the school website easy to navigate? Does the website provide information that users want? Does it provide a way for external viewers to communicate with individuals within the school?

**Physical School Office:** Is the school office easy to find? Is the office inviting? Are the staff friendly and helpful? Is printed information easily available? Are requests for information filed promptly?

Source: NSPRA's *How to Market Your School*

## Marketing and Branding

### Waterford Union High School New Logo Launch

Waterford Union High School in Wisconsin recently did a week-long logo launch for their school. **Kate Brown**, the school's director of communications and marketing and an NSPRA 35 Under 35 honoree for 2020–21, shared how they successfully promoted their new logos. These activities could be used in your own schools.



Those activities included:

- Sharing videos throughout the week such as the following [video on the school's Facebook page](#);
- Including the new logo on merchandise in their [new online clothing store, which will launch in a few weeks](#);
- Showcasing their students, staff and community during the process;
- Visiting local community spots and getting “first reactions” from people ([watch the video on their Facebook page](#));
- Ordering new staff shirts for everyone with the new logo — a big morale booster for the staff during this difficult school year; and
- Showcasing the school's old logo along with the new logo to honor tradition.

**Register to Access NSPRA  
Live 2020 Recordings  
Through July 2021**



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, last 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!

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