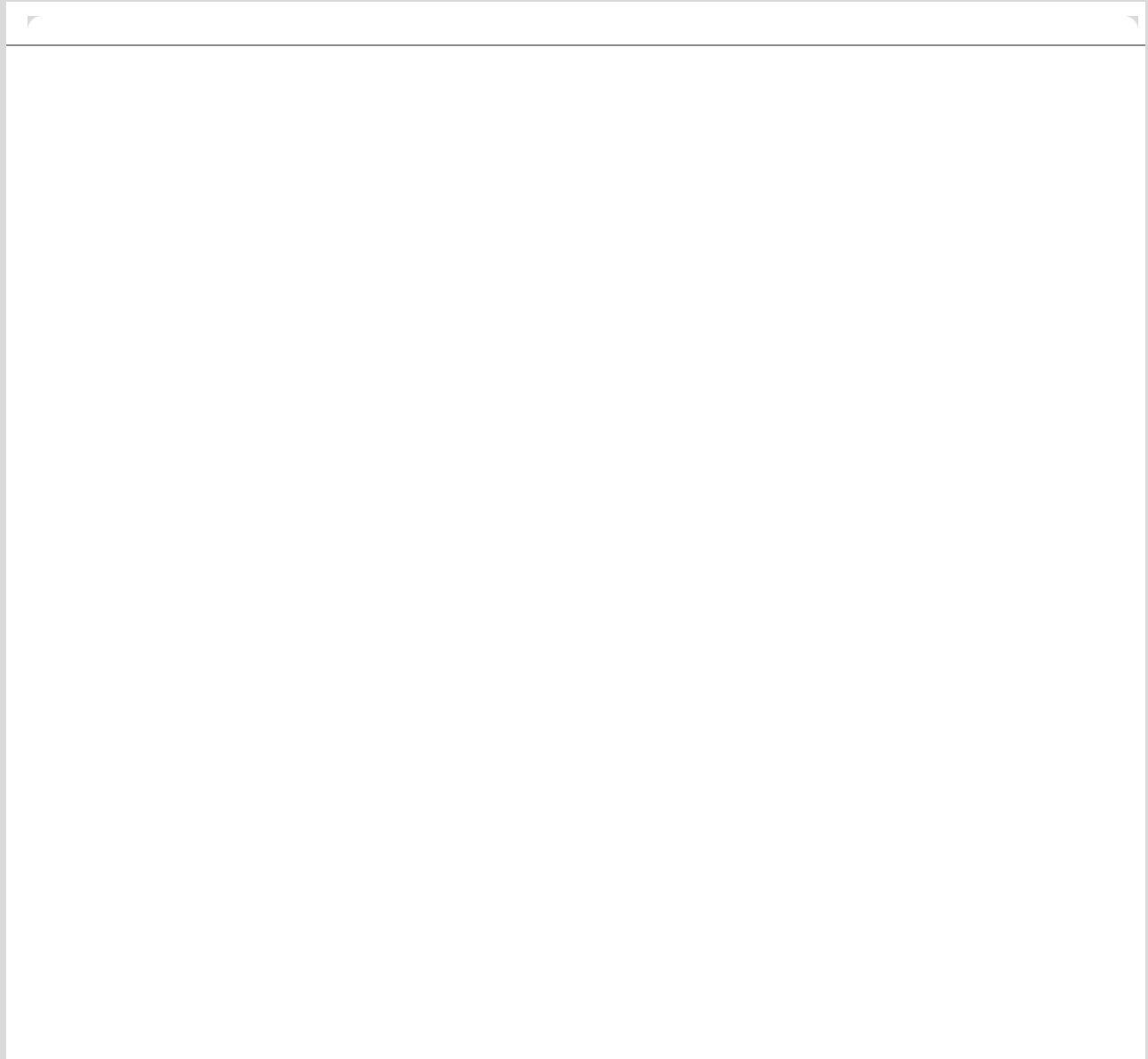


PRincipal Communicator - November 2020

[N nspra.org/sites/default/files/newsletter/principal_communicator/principal-communicator-2020-11.html](https://nspra.org/sites/default/files/newsletter/principal_communicator/principal-communicator-2020-11.html)

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Leading Off

Public Relations Guidelines for Crisis Management During COVID-19: A Roadmap for Principals

*By **Jim Dunn, APR**, communications consultant, Liberty, Mo.*



With the ongoing pandemic, principals are tackling the stress of managing remote learning and social distancing. In addition, wildfires in the West are forcing evacuations and polluting the air. There is “once in a century” flooding in the Midwest. The South is under constant hurricane threats and the 2020 election has been stressful to say the least.

There is no “Principal’s Guidebook for Surviving a Pandemic,” but there are guidelines for handling a crisis.

Mental health and self-care for principals during this time is vital. **Jim Dunn, APR**, outlines some guidelines that can also work as a principal’s roadmap to surviving the current times. They include:

- Make some time to take care of yourself. Modeling this type of behavior gives teachers permission to do the same.
- Develop relationships with your peers. For instance, the [Principal Life Facebook group](#) is a place to find support. Also check with your State and National principals associations for resources.
- Always be accurate, consistent and transparent. Communicate on an ongoing basis. If you’re not sure what’s going on, let people know that as well. Never lie or embellish.
- Ask, “What are the lessons from this pandemic? What changes will help us in the next crisis?” These questions imply you will get through this pandemic and be better for it.

[Read the full article.](#)

Creatively Communicate School Safety Measures via Video

The School District of Lee County in Fort Meyers, Fla. — which opened their school buildings in August — creatively explained their safety measures and face-coverings policy for their schools in video modules.



The first video shares the three W's in safety measures: (1) Wash your hands, (2) wear your mask and (3) watch your distance. [Watch the video.](#)

The second video outlines the face covering policy using the mascots in the district's schools. The video explains that students who don't have a face covering would be provided one by the district and explains which types of face coverings are permitted. The video demonstrates how to properly put on a mask and shares the safe times when students can take off their masks such as when they are eating. [Watch the video.](#)

Thank you to **Irma Lancaster**, the district's director of strategic communications, for sharing these videos on [NSPRA Connect](#). The videos are also featured on NSPRA's [Resources for Communicating the Transition to In-Person Learning webpage](#).

Grounding the Group

This activity introduces the notion of listening to one another with respect, so every member of your staff can be heard without interruption or judgement. Once listening with respect has become established in a group, it becomes the norm. The sound of an unchallenged voice in the room is a rare event for people, and this helps allay the fears for those who are apprehensive about voicing their ideas, opinions or concerns.



During current times, this exercise can be done virtually during a staff meeting through video conferencing programs such as Zoom's breakout room feature. You can put 6–8 people in a breakout room. Another option — if you would rather keep everyone in one main space during the meeting — is spotlighting one person at a time in the meeting, so their screen is pinned when it's their turn to speak.

Activity

Note: The facilitator should take notes to debrief at the end of the meeting.

- Each person gets a chance to speak uninterrupted for 2–3 minutes. A sample prompt could be, “Name your passion and why it’s important to you.”
- Tell the other people in the group to monitor how they listen and what judgements they may silently be making. For instance, a tightening of someone’s body could be a sign of a judgement starting to form.
- Let the participants know that as each person speaks, they should focus entirely on the speaker. Tell them not to think about what they will say until it’s their turn to speak.”
- Check any judgements possibly forming and suspend them for this exercise.
- After each person speaks, allow about fifteen to thirty seconds of silence before moving on to the next person.
- At the end of the exercise, debrief and have people share insights on how they felt during the exercise.

Source: *Politics of Authentic Engagement*

Going Social

Best Practices for Social Media Photos During COVID-19 Infographic

When sharing photos from your school, principals need to be cognizant of the health and safety of your students, teachers and staff. Principals also need to be aware of the optics of the photos taken at schools during the pandemic.

Lana Snodgras, director of communications and community relations in West Plains (Mo.) Schools, shared [an infographic](#) on [NSPRA Connect](#) with social media photography practices during the pandemic.



Best practices include:

- Use friendly gestures. Since people can't see a smile with masks on, a thumbs up or a wave can go a long way to show expression.
- Encourage everyone to spread out and keep their social distance, rather than bunch together in a photo.
- Focus on individual shots. A collage is a great way to showcase several people without taking group photos.
- If photos are from pre-pandemic times, label them accordingly.

[View the infographic.](#)



Staff Communications

Conducting School Safety Drills Through a COVID-19 Lens

Schools need to consider all safety and security measures through the COVID-19 lens, including school safety drills. **Rick Kaufman, APR**, executive director of community relations for Bloomington (Minn.) Public Schools, shared a [guidance document](#) on [NSPRA Connect](#) on best practices for a variety of safety drills including fire/ evacuation, severe weather and lockdown and shelter-in-place drills during COVID-19.



Guidelines include:

- Walk students through scenarios to demonstrate appropriate response procedures, including identifying safe space locations, what to do in a real emergency, where to go in an evacuation and how to physically distance at the rally point.
- Conduct the drill in stages rather than all at once. For example, instead of an all school evacuation drill, it can be conducted in stages with select wings of the building participating at one time.
- Consider staggering classroom releases.
- Check the corridor and exit the classroom when there is room to maneuver.
- Use hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations after exiting and entering the building.
- Maintain 6 feet physical distancing in single-file lines during the evacuation, at the staging area and upon re-entry to the school.

[Read the full guidance document.](#)

**Register for This Friday's PR Power Hour:
The Keys to Better In-House Videos**

[Register Now!](#)

Friday, Nov. 6, 2020 @ Noon Eastern



Sponsored by:
 **TeacherLists**

Video storytelling and production skills have become necessary for the modern communications department. Whether you're a one-person shop or one of many on a large team, chances are you've been asked to use video to increase support for and engagement with your school district. Explore the video communication best practices of a district that has earned numerous NSPRA Awards of Excellence for in-house videos.

The three panelists, who each have backgrounds in professional broadcasting or reporting, will share universal tips for producing better videos that can be adapted to the unique needs and equipment in your school system. Use the live Q&A and chat features for more personalized advice.

This virtual learning opportunity is ideal for school PR pros who want to improve their video skills. Qualified webinar attendees are eligible to receive one APR Renewal credit.

Presenters:

- **Stacia Harris**, communications director, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville, N.C. (~25,000 students)
- **Ben Rickert**, assistant director of communications, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville, N.C. (~25,000 students)
- **Tim Reaves**, digital communications specialist, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville, N.C. (~25,000 students)

Moderator: Curtis Campbell, NSPRA Northwest Region vice president



Register now for the November 2020 PR Power Hour.

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