

PRincipal Communicator - September 2020

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Leading Off

Leadership Leverage Through Intentional Communication

By Alicia Thompson, Ed.D., superintendent, Wichita (Kans.) Public Schools, and a 2018–19 Superintendents to Watch honoree

Dr. Alicia Thompson has worn many hats in Wichita (Kans.) Public Schools as a student, graduate, teacher, parent, principal, district administrator and currently the superintendent.



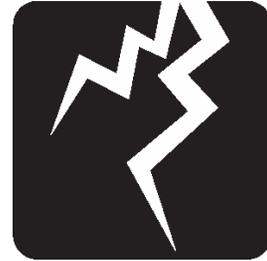
Having been a school building principal, she knows that a commitment to relationships — with students, parents and your community — is embedded in your building's school improvement plan.

In this month's Leading Off, she outlines four key commitments that helped her in her leadership roles: listening, speaking, writing and engaging with intentionality. She also shares lessons learned in each of these four commitments.

Crisis Communications

Guidelines for a Critical Incident Follow-Up

After a critical school-related incident, it is likely that the next time school is in session, a heightened level of emotion among students and staff will occur. This fall, be cognizant that these critical incidents occur as you are communicating about reopening schools during the pandemic, and in some areas, during hurricane or wildfire season. The critical incidents may include COVID-19-related deaths in your school community.



Consider the following procedures in such cases:

- As principal, call an emergency staff meeting at the earliest opportunity (virtual or in person), whether it's right after school or before classes begin the next day.
- At the staff meeting, review the facts known about the incident, the current status and the likely responses of students. Teachers should be informed of any schedule changes and any additional resources available to them.
- Following any type of critical incident, it is important to share accurate information with students. Provide an information fact sheet that teachers can use when talking to their students about the incident.
- If school staff are too distraught to lead the discussion, members of the School/District Critical Incident Response Team may take their place.
- All discussions with students should be at an age-appropriate level. Project a calm, reassuring and patient attitude.
- **Principals should be alert for student reactions**, including threats to commit acts similar to the critical incident, high absenteeism and strong expressions of grief, fear and anger.

Source: *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools, 4th Edition*

Top 10 Things You Need to Know: Back-to-School Guide

Gunter (Texas) Independent School District (GISD) developed a back-to-school guide with the top 10 things that students and their families need to know about reopening schools, including the safety measures that were put in place.



Since the district requires face coverings, the document includes information that GISD is providing all students two masks and a gaiter.

WHAT GISD IS PROVIDING FOR ALL STUDENTS:



Mask:

- Silky-soft, 2-ply polyester fabric is lightweight and comfortable
- Adjustable ear loops for excellent fit and prevention of ear fatigue
- Reusable and washable
- Form-fitting nose bridge insert creates a tighter seal
- Slot opening allows for a filter or another layer of fabric
- 3 sizes: Youth, Adult SM, Adult ML

Gaiter:

- Silky-soft, 2-ply polyester fabric is lightweight and comfortable
- Reusable and washable
- One-Size Fits All

GUNTER I.S.D. FOUNDATION
A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The document outlines the health and safety protocols in place for the school bus and during school meals, and describes how the arrival and dismissal parts of the day have changed. For example, the document notes that the schools in the district will adjust morning routines so there isn't a mass gathering of people in the cafeteria.

This type of guide can be adapted to use in your school. [Read the guide.](#)

Source: NSPRA's [Back-to-School Considerations](#) page

Test the Waters: Social Media Survey

Surveying students' families and your school's staff about social media use is helpful as you discern your next steps in your school's strategic digital communication plan. This type of survey will measure the degree that key groups of individuals are ready and interested in engaging on social media at the school level.



The following are key questions you can ask families and staff in your surveys:

Students' families

- If our school were to use social media as a tool to communicate with your family, how helpful would you find it? (Alternatively, if your school already uses social media, ask, "How helpful to you is our school's current use of social media?")
- What social media network do you and/or your spouse most regularly use?
- What kind of information do you most appreciate receiving from our school? What type of information would you like to receive more of from our school?
- What concerns would you have if the school were to use social media as a means to communicate with you?

School Staff

- How helpful is the professional use of social media in your job?
- What social media channels are you currently using? Are you using them personally or professionally?
- What would be the most exciting part of using social media professionally? What are your major concerns?
- What type of training would be the most helpful before using social media for your job?

Source: *The Social Media Imperative*

Marketing and Branding

New Teacher Website Hub — Helping Millennial and Gen Z Teachers Feel Welcome

To help new teachers feel welcome in your schools, create a virtual hub where new teachers can interact and gain insight about their job. Newer teachers are generally in the Millennial and Gen Z generations, so they typically are comfortable using technology to connect.



The resources on this hub help make the transition into education smoother for your teachers, especially at a time when it's difficult to safely meet and network in person.

Content for this virtual hub can include:

- A discussion forum space where the teachers can ask questions and interact with one another
- Tips for decorating your classroom or designing a virtual classroom
- A blog and/or podcast series for new teachers with tips and interviews from their peers and more experienced teachers and staff
- Event reminders
- Professional development opportunities
- Link to the benefits portal

Source: NSPRA Gold Mine — [Using Strategic Marketing to Recruit Millennial Teachers to Your School District \(PDF\)](#)

The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual, 4th Edition

NSPRA's *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual, 4th Edition*, includes guidance on crisis communication, using social media in an emergency, safe school assessments, and security audits. It provides updated information about school safety conditions, the Incident Command System, drills and exercises, and student reunification. It is written by NSPRA Past President Rick Kaufman, APR, along with additional advice by NSPRA members with experience in many situations.



This manual is available as a CD or a downloadable Zip file. Either option contains a PDF and MS Word version of the manual. [Order today.](#)

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