

Communication PRinciples for Principals

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KEY COMMUNICATOR GROUPS - SUPPORT STAFF



IDEA

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DEALING WITH KEY COMMUNICATOR GROUPS – SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

The first contact parents and the community have with your school is often your support staff. The staff is a valuable source of information about your school for both external and internal audiences. They are also the continuity in your school, welcoming many students, parents and commanders, and saying farewell to many as well.

Your staff has an opportunity to make an impression of your school with every contact they make. They provide a wealth of information to students, parents, and sometimes to commanders and influential people in the community. Staff members enhance awareness of your school and programs; increase understanding of your mission and goals; and build community support for your school.

As the leader of your school, you can make the most of this valuable communication resource by making your staff aware of the importance they play in your communications efforts and providing them with the tools to effectively communicate with the many audiences they interface with every day.



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How you can make the difference

- Explain to your staff that they are on the “Front Line” in your communications program, and they play an important role in building greater community support for your school.
- Provide staff development on public relations skills
- Make sure your staff members have accurate and current information about your school.

Who are the frequent sources of information in your school?

In developing your plan for communicating with staff members, a good place to start is to identify who the frequent sources of information are at your school. In surveys conducted in community after community, support staff tops that list.

Research shows that secretaries, supply technicians, registrars, and lunch monitors provide the most information to the general public. Following these groups are classroom aides, teachers, and school administrators.

Don't underestimate the value of informing your school support staff about all important school decisions. An aide or secretary who doesn't understand why a new program or curriculum has been implemented that may involve different activities, increased student interaction (and noise), might infer that students are sitting idle in the classroom and spread the word that time and money are being wasted. Their sentiments will come across to the public and erode the support and reputation your school has in the community.

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TIPS



Reaching frequent sources of information

You understand the importance and value of your staff in your communications program. How can you find the best way to deliver messages to all members of your staff?

Face-to-face communication is preferred. Staff bulletins are probably the most commonly-used and traditional means of communicating with staff members. Research, however, has shown that most employees like to receive information in small meetings from their immediate supervisor.

People want to hear from their immediate supervisor. Schools have many different staffing structures. One constant is that employees like to hear information from their immediate supervisors. This avenue becomes most critical when big changes loom on the horizon.

In the next issue, we will continue discussion about communicating with your staff members and provide advice and ideas for developing the tools and strategies you can use.

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