

COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES for PRINCIPALS

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ABOUT

PRinciples for Principals offers key information and messages for principals to consider in communicating the basics and getting parents involved. It is written and published by the DoDEA Communications Office.

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Welcome back to School Year 2015-2016. Whether you're a new principal or a seasoned veteran, we hope these newsletters on communication and public relations tips will help make the school year a smooth one in the area of communicating.

The focus of the school year in the DoDEA school system centers on the two priorities the Director set earlier this year. Priority 1 is College and Career Readiness (CCR) and Priority 2 is Restructuring for Student Achievement (RSA). Priority 2 helps to achieve Priority 1 by directing resources and shaping an organizational structure that is focused on student achievement and preparing students for college or a career. More than likely, your efforts will be predominantly focused on Priority 1 and to a lesser extent, especially with your staff, you will have to address Priority 2 on an infrequent basis.

If you're an elementary school principal, you are very familiar and heavily involved with implementing the first phase of CCR standards in DoDEA with the introduction of the Pre-K through Grade 5 mathematics standards. Eventually CCR standards in mathematics and literacy will be in place in every DoDEA school in every grade.

DON'T FORGET THE COMMUNICATIONS BASICS:

- » Back to school night
- » Open house
- » Parent-Teacher Conferences
- » Consistent 2-Way Communication

The standards will be implemented in a phased manner over the next 4 to 5 years and divided into four major categories – Pre-K through Grade 5 Mathematics; Grades 6-12 Mathematics, Pre-K through Grade 5 Literacy and Grades 6-12 Literacy. Parallel to these phased increments will be ongoing professional development and training for your teachers and a procurement of an assessment package that is aligned to the standards.

Priority 2 should be transparent to school level operations. The work being done to shape DoDEA's organizational structure, consolidating districts, and redefining and refining missions will be taking place at the district, area, and headquarters levels. That's not to say that you won't encounter questions from your staff or have to address this issue in your schools, with your parents or commanders. Your main communications requirements with regard to RSA is to be aware of the work and timelines involved with the RSA and to help your staff and community understand the RSA, its progress and its goals.

It's also important to understand and instill in your school communities and environment an understanding of the enduring nature of these priorities. They will be the focus of our work and efforts for many years to come and are not something that will disappear with the change of school years or leadership. Make sure you make these priorities topics of discussion, training, open houses, back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, commander's meetings and staff meetings. As a leader, your understanding, support and practice of the language and concepts tied to CCR and RSA is crucial.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

The best place to start planning communications for Back to School 2015-2016 is by visiting these websites:

- ✓ PR for Principals College and Career Ready Special Edition:
http://www.dodea.edu/newsroom/publications/upload/CCR_PRforPrincipals_April2015-2.pdf
- ✓ PR for Principals CCR Talking Points:
http://www.dodea.edu/newsroom/publications/upload/TalkingPoints_CCR_April2015-2.pdf
- ✓ DODEA's College and Career Ready Website:
<http://www.dodea.edu/collegeCareerReady/index.cfm>

Become familiar with the talking points and resources available to you, particularly the CCR website. The Parent Resource page contains downloads and printable fact sheets that you should have available for parents in your schools for Open House, Back to School Night, and Parent Teacher Conferences. Make sure to tailor the handouts to your audience. If you're the principal of a High School, best to have the information sheets on the parent resource page that are appropriate for the grades in your school. The Parent Fact Sheets are universal and should be prominently displayed and distributed to teachers so they can have them on hand for Back to School Night and Parent Teacher Conferences.

Make use of the Media Center. Have teacher show clips in their classrooms to parents. Consider a short presentation on the CCR E-Book. The resources are there – no need to reinvent the wheel. Make good use of your time by using them.

RESTRUCTURING FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

As a school principal, you will have the most direct involvement with this priority. You will be interfacing with district superintendents and eventually the Centers of Excellence (COE) and Forward Integrated Support Team (FIST) staffs.

Make sure you are familiar with the information on the RSA website: <http://www.dodea.edu/Restructuring/index.cfm>

Consult the website in your discussions with installation commanders and communities. If there are questions, make certain that you have the right information to answer them. If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, consult with your district superintendent or the following resources:

GetTheFacts@hq.dodea.edu - the primary source for factual information regarding DoDEA's Restructuring for Student Achievement

OpportunitiesOffice@hq.dodea.edu - the primary source for employment counseling and job opportunities related to DoDEA's Restructuring for Student Achievement

BASICS ARE STILL THE COMMUNICATIONS GOALS FOR PRINCIPALS

While the focus will be on the top two priorities this school year, don't forget the basics. Make sure you and your staff have communications basics as a priority as well. Back to School Night, Open House, Parent-Teacher conferences are the ways to keep communication lines between home and school open. This year, Math Nights will be particularly helpful for parents to learn about the Pre-K through Grade 5 CCR Standards for Mathematics and to better understand how and what their children will learn in math class this year. Reinforce the new standards with something in every newsletter this year about CCR and the CCR standards.

DON'T FORGET FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It's a well-known fact that first impressions about your school are made by your front office staff. Make sure they have the training and information they need to be helpful to parents, students, and the community.

SEEK OUT OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Whether it's conducting a Town Hall in the community or being interviewed by the base newspaper staff, don't pass up any opportunity to talk about the great students and teachers and events in your school!

NEED COMMUNICATIONS HELP? WE'RE HERE!

As the school year starts, and the focus is on the classroom, don't forget there is a communications team that can help you promote good news, cope with bad news, or deal with a crisis. Please reach out to your DoDEA communications representative in your area or at headquarters any time! Installation public affairs officers are always glad to help too.

Have a great school year and thank you for helping us tell the DoDEA story!

