

Strategies for School Leaders to Communicate Effectively

About me



Adam Davis

Communications
Strategist

NASSP

davisa@nassp.org

In the next hour...

- Give you four practical hacks for sharing the messages important to you and your school.
- Forever shift the way you view what you do.

Hardest job in ed: School leader

Student issues and discipline

- Social and emotional (also teenage hormones)
- Social media challenges
- Bullying

Parental complaints

Multiple subject areas and departments to oversee

Athletics and activities

School site safety

Large facilities

Diverse and ongoing needs

What should guide your communication?

We should always have a "North Star" guiding our communications

Align with district and school missions and goals

Innovative Learning:
Focus on innovation in programs and teaching

Community Engagement:
Focus on initiatives connecting schools with the community

Inclusive Education:
Focus on efforts in diversity and accessibility

It comes down to this...



Quick discussion

- What are three words do you want your stakeholders to use to describe your school?
- Do your communications (website, social media, emails, personal interactions, online reviews, etc.) reflect those words?

Hack #1 Communications Checklist

- ✓ Website; Easy to use and regularly updated
- ✓ Regular admin communication (weekly)
- ✓ In-person communication and events
- ✓ Social media platforms
- ✓ Crisis communication plan
- ✓ Notification platforms and processes
- ✓ Press protocols
- ✓ Front office public interaction
- ✓ Up-to-date staff contact information
- ✓ Regular staff meetings

Hacks #2+3 Comms Plan + Crisis Messaging



Scan for Checklist,
School
Communications Plan
Template, and Crisis
Messaging

Thanks to Christine Paik and Brett W.
McFadden

YOU are your school's chief storyteller



Reputation = Enrollment

Gain the edge when competing for enrollment

Improve culture, retain staff

Relationships = Trust

Counter rumors

Gain buy-in

Media: Opportunity > Fear

- Amplify positive stories (accomplish school site goals)
- Community engagement
- Influence public opinion, practices, and policy
- Professional development

The Best Defense (and Offense) is Preparation

- Communicate to audiences, not reporters
- **Get across the 1-3 points you think are important, regardless of the question**
- Anticipate and prepare for questions
- Feel free to ask questions to reporter
- Pause before you speak to collect your thoughts
- Stick to what you know (don't lie or guess)

Hone your message

- What are 2-3 things you wish the public knew about improving school culture?
 - How have you innovated create a positive culture?
 - What is a culture challenge you want help addressing?
- Include stories of how it's affected you, your students, and your staff.

Hack #4 Pivoting to your message



- The pivot is a way of taking a question on a specific subject and moving to answer it on your own terms.
- What is the question?
- What does Bush talk about?

In Practice

- The bridge carries you safely from their story to your story
- Keep it authentic: pay the toll
- Travel over your favorite, most beautiful bridge
- Do not go in reverse
- Merge/Pivot into your story



The Bridge & Pivot Technique



Their Story

What are they trying to tell?



Safe Crossing: the Bridge

- Look, the bottom line is...
- I think we can all agree...
- What's really important is..
- What I can tell you as an educator is...
- I think parents will want to know...



Your Story

What do you want to tell?

Additional questions

- With the increasing use of technology in classrooms, are you exposing students to harmful amounts of screen time?
- Given the rising mental health issues among students, do you think schools are failing in providing adequate support?
- Why is there such a lack of diversity among teachers in your district?

Shortage practice questions

- How is the teacher shortage affecting your ability to offer a full range of subjects?
- Aren't you lowering your hiring standards because of the teacher shortage?

Partner with NASSP



Adam Davis

davisa@nassp.org

781-864-2563

- Share your stories with me!
- Text/email me your name, title, and school for opportunities



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Thank you!

Connect with Adam

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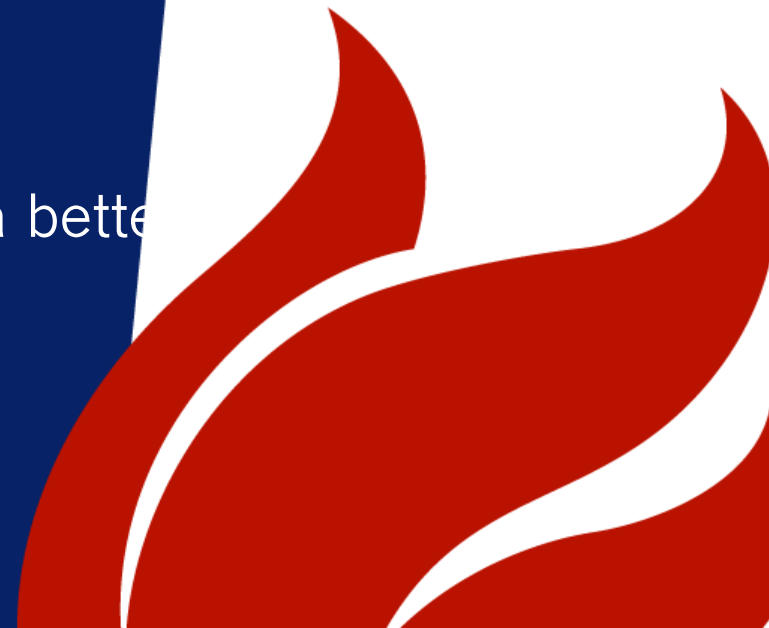
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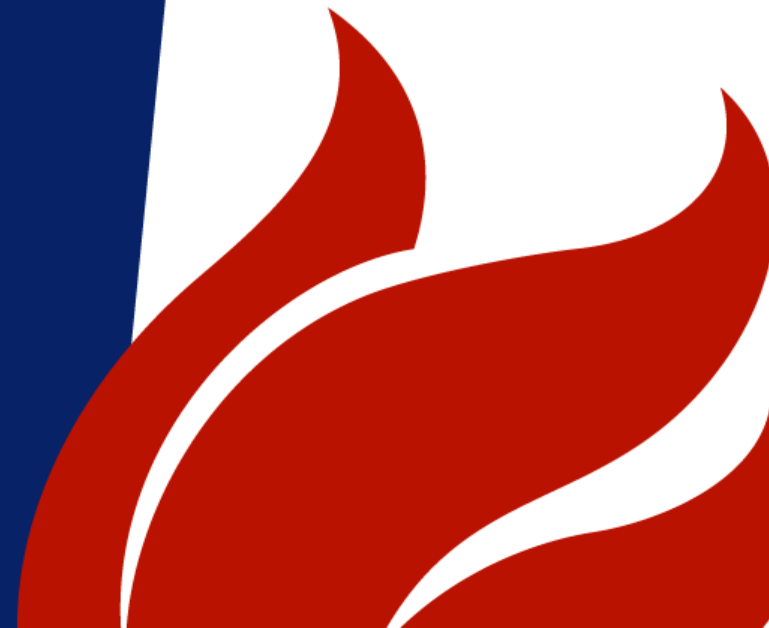
Thank you!

What do you commit to doing to be a better communicator?



Common Reporter Techniques

- Hypothetical
- Not the Expert
- False Facts
- Phantom Authority
- Dart Thrower
- Machine Gun
- Interruption
- Paraphrase
- Negative Questions
- A or B
- Silence



Why work with the media?

Montana  PBS

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The Washington Post



Agenda

- Quick Media Exercise
- How to Prepare
- Mastering the Bridge and Pivot
- Avoiding Reporter “Traps”
- Putting your Learning to the Test

Opportunity > Fear

- Crisis
- Expert Opinion
- Proactive Media/Day in a Life

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The Best Defense (and Offense) is Preparation

- Stick to what you know (don't lie or guess)
- In person? Give materials.
- Not in person? Use your notes.
- Use your smart phone to record your interviews.
 - You have a record of what you actually said
 - You'll learn from your experience, and it will help you in future interviews.

The Bridge and Pivot Technique

- The press is looking for a story:
 - Timely
 - Simple
 - Change—better or worse
 - Conflict, drama, tension
 - Proximity (local angle)
 - Wrongdoing/Feel-good themes



The Bridge and Pivot Technique

- You have a story you want to tell
 - Stories about real people
 - Impact, not process
 - Simple, easy to understand
 - Human/empathetic
 - Free from jargon



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Questions?



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