



# **Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance Symposium** **12/9/2010**

## **PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

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Every Communication Effort has **ONE** Message:

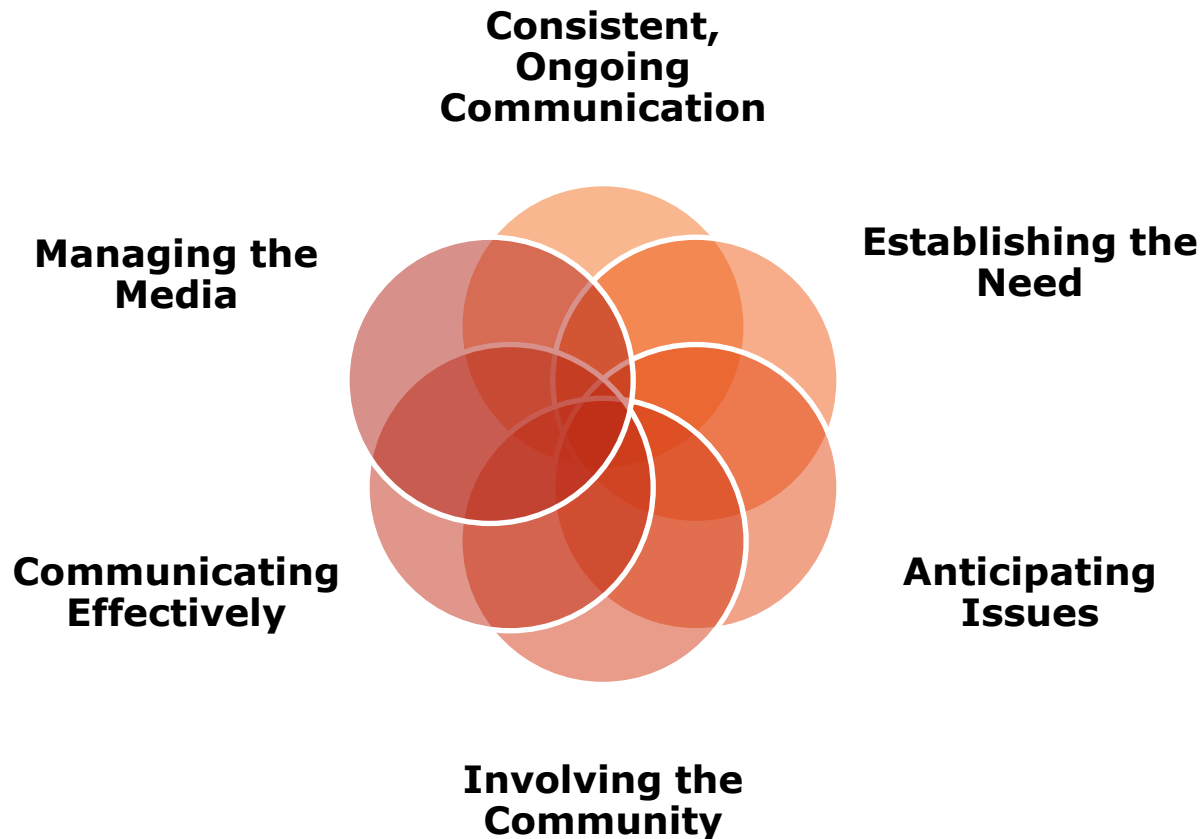
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## **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS**

- ✓ Joint effort between school district and community advocacy groups
- ✓ Consistent, long-term commitment to effective communication
- ✓ Student and community focused messaging

# What It Means to Be “Proactive”

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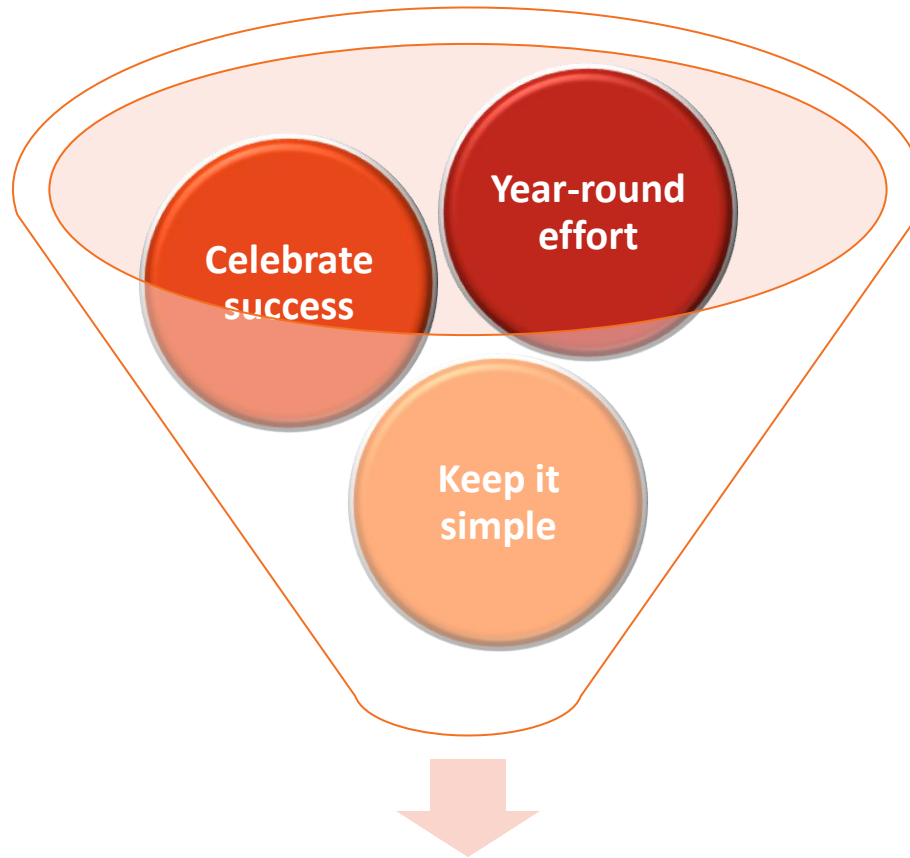


## Why This is Important?

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- ✓ Increases Awareness of District Issues
- ✓ Produces Transparent Process
- ✓ Decisions Based on Values of Stakeholders
- ✓ Builds Community Support, Trust, and Advocacy

# Key Ingredients



**Effective Communications Program**

# Establish the Need First

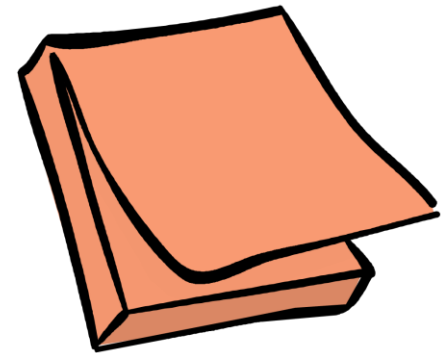
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- ✓ Be direct and honest
- ✓ Provide objective data to reinforce key issues
- ✓ Explain how, why key issues have developed
- ✓ Demonstrate what is being done to address key issues right now
- ✓ Repeat these messages, over and over

# Create Key Messages that Stick

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- ✓ Focus on needs as central, simple messages
- ✓ Streamline messages to avoid competing agendas
- ✓ Provide supporting facts to build credibility
- ✓ Use examples, stories, data, visuals to move messages from *abstract* to *concrete* ideas
- ✓ Tailor messages to key audiences



# Anticipate Issues

- ✓ Do your homework and be prepared for your critics
- ✓ Stay on top of research, legislative updates
- ✓ Prioritize educational program and facility needs/goals
- ✓ Cultivate team leadership to prepare for transitions and turn-over



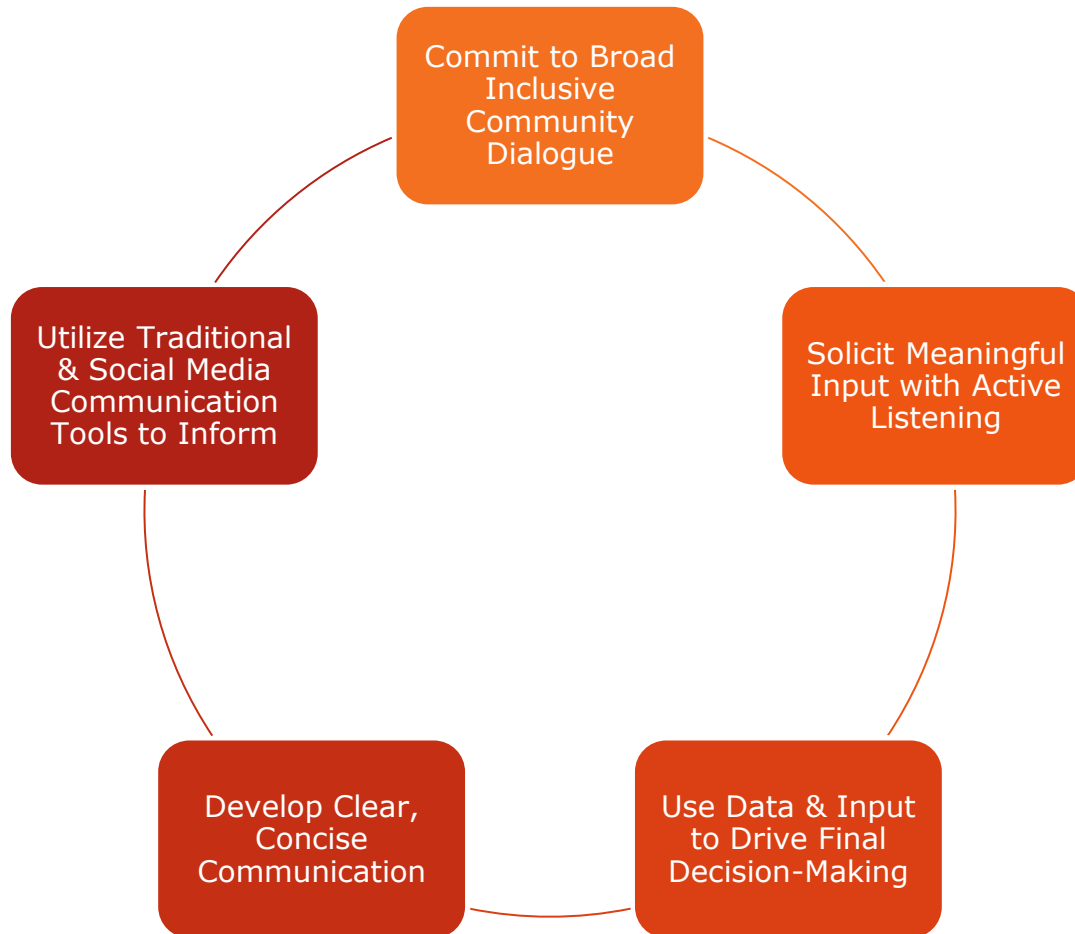
## Be Realistic

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- ✓ Be realistic with expectations, goals
- ✓ Schedule regular touch points with key communicators and volunteers to keep them active
- ✓ Set achievable milestones and celebrate all accomplishments!

# Work to Engage the Community

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- ✓ Sincerely involve all stakeholders
- ✓ Provide opportunity for two-way communication
  - Engage residents & staff in the development of the priorities/initiatives/messaging
  - Solicit community feedback BEFORE decisions are finalized
  - Listen and understand community perceptions, concerns, and interests



# Strategies to Involve Residents

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# Use Input to Motivate and Educate

- ✓ Identify and prioritize strategies, messages
- ✓ Respond to areas of interest, concern
- ✓ Use data to measure benchmarks, outcomes of efforts
  - Overall support for (or perception of) district
  - Involvement/activism
  - Next steps

Planning Input			
As the district develops and prioritizes items as part of a long-range plan to address our facility needs, how important are each of the following issues to you? <small>(Critical = 4, Important = 3, Somewhat Important = 2, Not Important = 1)</small>			
	Non Parents	Parents	Staff
1	Assure safe and secure school buildings 3.04	Assure safe and secure school buildings 3.07	Provide adequate classroom space for current educational programs 3.69
2	Improve cost effectiveness of building operations 3.27	Provide adequate classroom space for current educational programs 3.25	Provide adequate space to reduce district class sizes to the recommended class sizes 3.03
3	Improve energy efficiency of buildings 3.16	Improve cost effectiveness of building operations 3.17	Assure safe and secure school buildings 3.08
4	Provide adequate classroom space for current educational programs 3.09	Provide adequate space to reduce district class sizes to the recommended class size 3.10	Provide adequate classroom space for students with special needs 3.47
5	Replace outdated heating and ventilation systems 2.93	Improve energy efficiency of buildings 3.1	Replace outdated heating and ventilation systems 3.41
6	Provide adequate classroom space for students with special needs 2.88	Provide adequate classroom space for students with special needs 3.02	Improve energy efficiency of buildings 3.33
7	Upgrade technology for current/future teaching and learning 2.81	Replace outdated heating and ventilation systems 3.01	Improve cost effectiveness of building operations 3.21
8	Provide adequate space to reduce district class sizes to the recommended class size 2.79	Upgrade technology for current/future teaching and learning 3.00	Maintain school facilities that create a sense of community pride and enhance property values 3.19
9	Maintain school facilities that create a sense of community pride and enhance property values 2.63	Provide adequate space for music and art 2.82	Provide adequate space for outdoor student activities (i.e. playgrounds and physical education) 3.19
10	Provide adequate space for music and art 2.58	Maintain school facilities that create a sense of community pride and enhance property values 2.75	Upgrade technology for current/future teaching and learning 3.15
11	Provide adequate space for outdoor student activities (i.e. playgrounds and physical education) 2.64	Provide adequate space for outdoor student activities (i.e. playgrounds and physical education) 2.73	Provide adequate space for music and art 3.16
12	Attract families with school-age children to Watertown 2.13	Attract families with school-age children to Watertown 2.28	Attract families with school-age children to Watertown 2.81
13	Provide quality performing arts facilities for student and community use 2.03	Provide an indoor swimming pool for student and community use 2.28	Provide an indoor swimming pool for student and community use 2.44
14	Provide an indoor swimming pool for student and community use 1.92	Provide quality performing arts facilities for student and community use 2.26	Provide quality performing arts facilities for student and community use 2.42
15	Provide meeting/recreational space for community use 1.71	Provide meeting/recreational space for community use 1.83	Provide meeting/recreational space for community use 2.06

- ✓ Create Clear, Simple Messages
- ✓ Use Them Consistently
- ✓ Schedule & Maintain Regular Communication Updates
- ✓ Utilize Multiple Mediums
  - Online Communications & Social Media
  - Print & Mail Communications
  - Traditional News Media

Avoid complex answers.

*What are the  
issues?*

*Why is this  
important?*

*How will it impact  
me?*

- ✓ Always respond ASAP
- ✓ Assume nothing
- ✓ Provide written information as background
- ✓ Anticipate questions
- ✓ Pitch story ideas, provide local angle
- ✓ Correct inaccuracies

✓ Wisconsin School Public Relations Association

[www.wspra.org](http://www.wspra.org)

✓ Stand for Children

[www.stand.org](http://www.stand.org)

✓ Fund Education Now

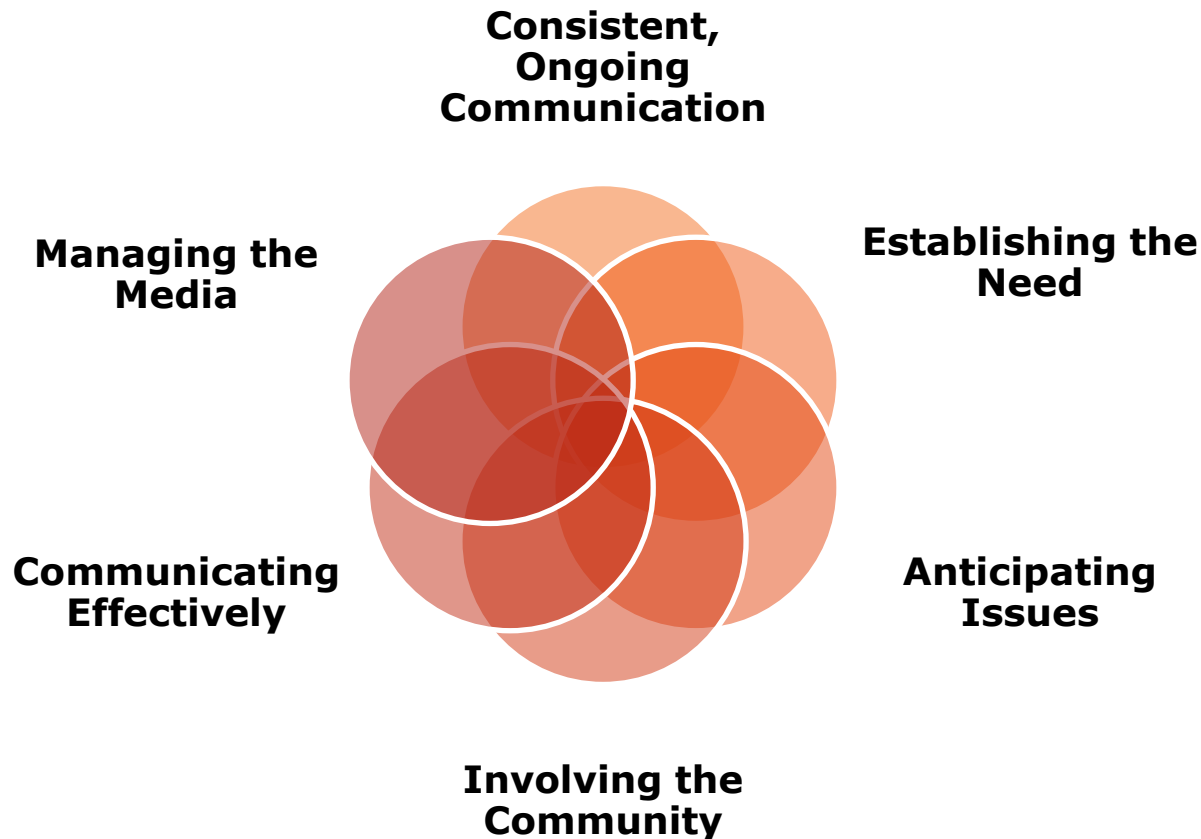
[www.fundeducationnow.org](http://www.fundeducationnow.org)

✓ Knight Soul of the Community Report 2010

[www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org)

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