

Eleven Considerations for Effective Communication, Community Relations, and Engagement

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These eleven considerations for effective communication and engagement have been developed to provoke thinking and stimulate discussion. Each and all of them could be considered as guidelines. However, the list is not intended to be and is by no means complete.

- **Effective Communication.** Define effective communication as inclusive, two-way, and strategic. *Consider it the art, the science, the process of creating mutual understanding between a school or school system and its internal and external publics. Research, listening, collaborating, and planning are part of the communication process. Make clear that everyone associated with an organization plays a key communication role. Develop a firm grasp of the reality that if we are not in touch with societal trends and issues, we will likely develop a reputation for being out of touch. Remember that constant defense of the status quo can become a ticket to obsolescence.*
- **Identity.** As an individual and as a learning institution, earn an identity or reputation as an inclusive, passionate, energetic, eloquent, future-oriented leader in getting students ready for life in a fast-changing world.
Develop a narrative for what you want to become. Make that narrative a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- **Leadership and Engagement.** Insist on genuine, systematic, broad-based, ongoing engagement to help us stay in touch and provide advice and counsel for planning and decision making.
- **Intellectual Leadership.** Earn the status of an intellectual leader in your community, a person who understands both the big picture and little picture...and how they connect.
Communicate meaning...not just information.
- **Ethical Behavior.** Make the ethical dimension a part of everything you do, every direction you take, and every decision you make. Always strive for the higher ground.
- **Communicating in a Crisis.** Develop, communicate, and regularly update a crisis plan that covers several types of potential events or situations.
Be prepared to lead and communicate if and when a crisis strikes.
- **Media Relations.** Strive to become a counsel for the news media on a broad range of issues and trends that have implications for education and the community.
- **Thematic Efforts.** Capture the essence of what the institution is trying to accomplish in a theme that is anchored in solid goals and behaviors.
- **Personal Experiences.** Remember that personal experiences people have with an institution will override any amount of information that it communicates.
- **Board Community Relations.** Develop clarity on guidelines for the communication and community relations role of boards and board members, including the imperative of encouraging a sound, ongoing commitment to effective organizational communication.
- **Significant Initiatives.** Use an inclusive process for building two-way understanding, support, and a sense of ownership in leading strategic initiatives.
Initiatives might range from curriculum adoptions to finance elections.

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