

Communication *PR*inciples for Principals

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BUILD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



IDEA

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BUILDING SUPPORT, CREATING A POSITIVE REPUTATION AND INVITING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

A recent National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 10-year study on the principalship pointed out that communication, marketing, public affairs, public relations and public engagement activities are given more time and importance than ever before. Today's principals are key leaders in building public support and creating a positive reputation for their schools.

While many people have great confidence in their schools, rating their local schools higher than others around the nation in public opinion barometers such as the Gallup Poll and the Public Agenda Foundation, these same opinion monitors indicate that the public is becoming more skeptical about public education. With opinions at opposite ends of the spectrum, communication, public affairs and public relations become critical in bridging the gap and garnering the public support needed to build great schools for our children.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – WHAT IS IT?

Relationship building is key to success in schools and constitutes the majority of public engagement activities. Public engagement calls for skills in public relations, public affairs, marketing, communication, and organizational management. This process places a high priority on listening to key audiences and then jointly working with audience members as partners to do what is best for all children in your school community. It takes community support to create a positive school environment and positive school reputation, and public engagement is the catalyst for community support.



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GETTING STARTED ON THE ROAD TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Finding the answers to a series of questions can help principals analyze their current relationship with the community and key audiences, what it might take from the community and school to embark on the road to public engagement and what the ideal end state is to achieve increased public engagement and a positive school environment.

Meet with commanders, parents, school liaison officers, and your staff and discuss these questions:

- What do we mean when we say we want our school to be engaged with the community?
- What do we want the engagement process to do for our schools?
- What do we want the public engagement process to do for our community?
- What gaps or shortcomings does our school have where support from the community can help us?
- How can the public's engagement make our school better?

Content adapted from Principals in the Public, published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA).

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TIPS

