



On Call

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact:
Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information,
contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors'
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

- **Bond communications: before, during and after**

A school bond campaign can be difficult and time-consuming. With careful planning and communication, the road to success can be much smoother. Read best practices for each step along the way.

- **Making the change: implementing policy governance**

In the last two issues of On Call we discussed policy governance, a trademarked model for board governance. The first article described this model as clarifying roles for board members and administrators, and delegating authority to the superintendent for day-to-day management of the district. The second article provided tips for how a board might consider such a model and prepare to adopt it. In this article we give guidelines for implementing policy governance .

- **Use content to tell your story**

Your district has great stories – content. Content marketing is creating interesting content and distributing it to encourage engagement. A content marketing plan will define who you want to reach, what you want to share and why.

- **Use your survey data to build an effective communications plan**

Use the results of your community survey to build an effective year-round communications plan. Planning form included.

- **Using social media for professional development**

Many of the newest and best educational professional development tools can be found online, which allows staff to be self-directed, improve technology skills and share information via social tools.

- **Insights for Parents: Parents' Guide to the Common Core**

Do you know what the common core is? Many parents, and even school staff, do not. The Common Core State Standards are new, more difficult academic standards for language arts and math. They have been adopted by all but four states. Read these tips to support the Common Core at home.



On Call

Bond communications: before, during and after

School bonds. The music of “Jaws” often rings in the ears of superintendents, board members and school communicators when those two words are first uttered in a school district. While it’s true that embarking on a school bond adventure can be difficult and time-consuming, it doesn’t have to be terrifying. With some careful planning, plenty of communication and a full commitment from the board, navigating the road to a successful bond can become a much smoother ride.

A solid communication plan that promotes district and student successes, highlights programs and adequately responds to difficult situations can go a long way in developing the community’s trust in its schools. Such trust can turn into support for your bond down the line. Even if your district is not currently considering a bond, it’s important to make sure your communication strategies are making the right impression on your community on a regular basis.

Communication is essential to a school bond. Since the school district will potentially be using public dollars to fund its projects, the public will rightfully want to be kept in the loop and part of the process. While your district can’t let the public control the process, it’s important that community members feel as though they had input that influenced the bond. This public input should be a part of your communications efforts throughout the bond process – before, during and after – whether the bond succeeds or not.

Before the bond decision

Effective communication prior to asking voters to consider approving a bond or levy is probably more important than the communication the district puts forth during the actual campaign. This “pre-bond” communication will set the stage for the public’s trust in the district as it moves forward with the bond.

The entire bond process is really a two- to- three-year endeavor. This time period – though it may seem long – allows the district enough time to do its homework to demonstrate to the public the real needs for bond funding and to educate the community on why it should support it on election day.

Determining facility needs

When determining whether or not a district will ask voters to consider a bond, the first step is to define the needs within the district. While it may be easy for administrators and maintenance staff to produce a laundry list of facility needs, the district will need to first determine what the public will support.

Many districts will opt to contract for site and building evaluations to gather the data they need to justify certain facility needs and to develop a comprehensive long range facility plan for its schools. Population studies and enrollment predictions can also generate useful data

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact:
Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information,
contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors’
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

(Over)

for districts with growth potential and the need for more space. It's important for the public – and your school staff – to see this data so they can begin to understand the district's facility needs.

Posting these findings on your district's website is one step toward transparency throughout the pre-bond communication process. Another option is to ask local community stakeholders to participate on a strategic facilities committee to review the data collected by the district and provide recommendations to the board for consideration. Be sure to include parents, maintenance staff, officials from your city's planning or building departments, teachers, classified staff, business leaders, public safety officials and any other stakeholders in your community who may have an interest in the district's future.

Hosting community forums to show the public your research findings and the strategic facilities committee's recommendations is another way to involve your public in the bond process. Following your community forum, the district may want to take the opportunity ask attendees to participate in an online survey to respond to the information they just received in the meeting. This type of information gathering can assist the district and its board in prioritizing projects and making a final determination for moving forward with a bond.

During the bond campaign

Once your district's board has determined it will ask voters to consider a bond, developing key messages for your information campaign should be next on your task list. It's important to note that many state election laws prohibit public institutions, such as school districts, from advocating for a bond measure or any other type of election. This is when an *information* campaign becomes essential for the district. This type of campaign provides impartial, facts-only information about the bond to the community without influencing voters one way or the other. A separate, non-district affiliated political action committee can then take the reins on the advocacy campaign to pass the bond.

There are numerous ways your district can communicate factual information about your bond to the community throughout the campaign, including:

- Information in your regular district or school newsletters
- Flyers, post cards and/or brochures mailed out to the entire community
- A dedicated page on your website with all essential bond information and data
- News releases and interviews with media
- A video highlighting needs within your district
- Posters with any proposed new or remodeled building design concepts

Face-to-face communication, however, always makes the strongest impact. Your superintendent and board will want to talk to as many community members as possible to convey a consistent message about the bond and answer any questions or concerns. Since public institutions are prohibited from advocating for a bond measure, your superintendent and board can team up: your superintendent can present the facts about your district's bond, while your elected board members can push for the "yes" vote.

These presentations can be provided to civic groups, all the animal clubs (Lions, Elks, Moose, Eagles, etc.), local unions/associations, businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, city leaders, and assisted living facilities (don't forget your senior citizen voters – they tend to be the most consistent voters). In addition, presenting to your local media editorial boards can also lead to an endorsement of your bond measure.

Make sure the advocacy campaign has all the right facts and information to keep messages clear and consistent. Consistency is key throughout the campaign – you don't want the public

getting confused about what they hear regarding the bond. Messages should be loud and clear, with information easy to access.

After the election

The day after the election is either filled with disappointment or rejoicing. Regardless of the election's outcome, communication remains important for the district. Whether your bond passed or not, be sure to thank the community for its support throughout the process. This public acknowledgement can go a long way to maintain support for future endeavors.

If your district's bond fails to pass, don't beat yourself up. Take this as a learning opportunity. You'll want to find out why it didn't pass to avoid making the same mistakes or oversights the next time you try for a bond.

Survey your community to see where votes may have been lost or missed, and find out the reasons "no" voters voted the way they did. Were there concerns the district wasn't aware of? Were there portions of your bond proposal with which some members of your community did not agree? Were there voters who felt as though they didn't have enough information to make an informed decision? The public will appreciate knowing the district is trying to move forward in a positive and productive manner rather than wallowing in its loss.

However, if your district is doing the post-election happy dance, you have a whole new communications process ahead of you. Now that the public has entrusted your district with its hard-earned dollars, you'll want to demonstrate the district is a good steward of those funds.

As bond projects move forward and begin to take shape – from soliciting bids from architects, designers, contractors and vendors, to demolishing, breaking ground and opening new or remodeled doors – your community will want to be informed along the way.

Remember that bond information page you set up on your district's website? Now's the time to update it with new information about the state of the bond projects. Be sure to include a project timeline and plenty of photos showing progress along the way. Some districts have opted to stream a video feed from construction sites to show live progress of bond projects, and others work with the construction manager to keep a project blog on the website. A regular feature in your district newsletter can also keep the community up to speed, as can regular updates on your district Facebook and Twitter pages.

Finally, celebrate the completion of bond projects with another thank you to your community. Host open houses and celebrate the fact that your community invested in its schools. Most importantly – keep the communication going long after bond projects are completed. You never know when a new bond is right around the corner.

Contributed by Casey White-Zollman, Director of Communications, InterMountain Education Service District, Pendleton, Ore.



On Call

Making the change: implementing policy governance

In the last two issues of On Call we discussed policy governance, a trademarked model for board governance. The first article described this model as clarifying roles for board members and administrators, and delegating authority to the superintendent for day-to-day management of the district. The second article provided tips for how a board might consider such a model and prepare to adopt it. In this article we give guidelines for implementing policy governance or one of its offshoots.

Getting started

You've done your homework, you've made the decision to adopt policy governance* or a similar model, now how do you begin?

Check in with your community

According to the policy governance model developed by Dr. John Carver, "...it is useful to conceive that community-based agencies in the social services, health, education, and other fields are 'owned' by their communities" (www.carvergovernance.com/pg-np.htm). This puts the board in the position of owner-representative and servant-leader, charged with the responsibility of carrying out the community's wishes. Thus, one of the first steps is to find out what the community values and wants for its students.

Make a comprehensive plan for checking in with your community members to find out what they value and what they expect from their schools. This can be similar to a strategic planning process and you can use a variety of tools to elicit input from the community: online surveys, listening tours, focus groups, community forums, visits to service clubs and other groups, etc. Ask them questions like:

- What are we doing well?
- What could we do differently?
- What do you see as challenges or opportunities?
- Where do you think we should be next year? 5 years? 10 years?

Additionally, it may be helpful to ask questions to determine current perceptions of the district, which will help you set communication plans. Examples:

- What have you heard about the district?
- How are our students doing with test scores/college and job preparedness?
- How are we doing with fiscal management?

The goal of all of this is to find out what's important for your community in terms of student performance and behavior, so that you can make sure your district's performance matches expectations.

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact:
Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information,
contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors'
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

(Over)

Determine your values

Using all the information you receive from your community, the board is now in a position to identify its values.

- What would you like your students to be able to do when they graduate?
- What standards are important for measuring student success?
- What student behaviors matter to the community?
- What are areas to prioritize when making budget decisions?

And so forth. It is important to understand what the community cares about, so that the board can guide the district in those directions.

Write new board policies

The next step is to develop your values into concrete standards, benchmarks and processes that can be used to evaluate performance. It will be helpful to compare policies from other districts to help you get clear about what you want.

Although titles may differ, under policy governance and similar models, you will need policies for four different categories.

- **Results** – these policies refer to the outcomes you want to achieve
- **Operational Expectations** – these outline the do's and don'ts for superintendents.
- **Governance Culture** – these outline the board's work and expectations
- **Board/Superintendent Relationship** – these clarify the different roles and authority of the board and superintendent and lay out the process for monitoring the district and superintendent

You will need to consider:

- What benchmarks do you want your students to meet – and when? What represents reasonable progress towards these goals?
- What tools will you use to measure student behaviors and growth?
- What identifiers will you use to determine the district's fiscal health?
- What characteristics will you use to determine that staff and community relationships are sound?
- How often and when do you want to evaluate each area?

The process of writing new policies takes a few day-long sessions over several months for most districts. The majority of the former board policies will now become administrative.

Tell the community

Be sure to let the community know what you are doing to change your governance and why. Report back all the information you received from them, and tell them what you are doing to guide the district in the ways they value.

Let the monitoring begin

Once the policies are completed, you will start monitoring and evaluating performance, based on the schedule you set while creating your policies. Don't be surprised if you immediately start to make changes to your policies.

Monroe Public Schools, Monroe, Washington (www.monroe.wednet.edu) completed its policies in December 2012, and has already revised several. "The first time through, consider them as a draft," said Monroe board member Jim Scott. "Until we work through a cycle, we won't know enough. As we work our way through, we are figuring out some of those things."

This stage is demanding for the administrative staff, as they learn to draft reports in the new format.

(Over)

Explore your new freedom

Under policy governance the board assigns responsibility for many decisions to the superintendent. Many of the decisions required of the board by law may be moved to a consent agenda, opening up time for discussion of important aspects of the board's work and opportunities for meaningful conversations with representatives from different sectors of the community.

"Our meetings got shorter in terms of detail and longer in terms of in-depth discussion," said Bob Hughes, former board member of Lake Washington School District, near Seattle, Washington. "It freed us up to talk about how our kids are doing in math, reading, and learning to be citizens of the world. It opened up a way to bring in citizens and ask them what they think."

Celebrate

Be sure to take time to reflect on the work you have done to change your district's way of doing business, and the new freedom you have to focus on improving the education of your community's children.

**For simplicity, the term policy governance will be used to refer to both the original, trademarked model developed by Dr. John Carver, and similar models.*

Contributed by Candace Wilson, communications consultant



On Call

Use content to tell your story

Your district is a wealth of great stories, and interesting stories engage people. Most districts are good at sharing district highlights in some form – on the Web, in presentations, in newsletters – but they could create a greater impact if they become part of the district’s broader content marketing plan.

What is content marketing?

Content marketing is not new. Two early examples are the Michelin Guide, which began in 1900 to help drivers maintain their cars and find lodging, and Soap Operas on the radio, sponsored by Procter and Gamble in the 1930s (<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/>). Recipes on food packaging and branded magazines are also good examples.

Content marketing is “creating useful or desirable content, distributing it to those that can benefit most from it, and personalizing it to encourage engagement.” (www.jeffkorhan.com/2011/03/what-is-content-marketing.html)

The Content Marketing Institute says the purpose of content marketing is “to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior. It is an ongoing process that is best integrated into your overall marketing strategy, and it focuses on owning media, not renting it. Basically, content marketing is the art of communicating with your customers and prospects without selling. It is non-interruption marketing.”

Marketing your schools in this way is not different than communicating about your schools. The goal is the same – building trust and sharing information on a regular basis. “We need to get and keep attention by creating valuable, compelling and consistent storytelling programs.” (<http://contently.com/strategist/2013/09/05/it-all-started-with-a-tractor-magazine-in-1895-getting-schooled-by-the-content-marketing-institute/>)

Digital content marketing

Today’s popular forms of content marketing include social media, web or print articles, e-newsletters, print newsletters, case studies, blogs, white papers, webinars, digital or print magazines, reports, podcasts and e-books.

The Content Marketing Institute suggests starting with a content strategy before a social media strategy. “You can’t succeed in social media if you don’t have something interesting to say. Social media is the vehicle for communicating and distributing interesting stories (content) across the Internet. In turn, readers share the content they think is compelling. The purpose of content strategy is to facilitate the consistent delivery of interesting stories. The end result is that you will attract and retain the attention of the targeted audience that you want to reach.” (<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/05/content-strategy-before-social-strategy/>)

(Over)

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact:
Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information,
contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors’
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

Building a content marketing strategy

Understand 1) who you are trying to reach, 2) what you want to share and 3) why you are engaging them.

Are you speaking to parents? The community in general? Staff? Senior citizens?

A few tips about understanding your audience:

1. Be clear. Your audience doesn't know what you know. They may need background or context.
2. Your audience is eager to get to the point. Make sure it is clear why you are telling your story.
3. Your audience wants a reason to retell your story: Tell a good, compelling story that people would want to share.

(<http://contently.com/strategist/2013/08/03/storytelling-for-an-audience-3-tips-from-an-editor/>)

What is the best content for each? Stories on your website can be for a general audience, but your social media presence for your schools may be for parent engagement. Figure out what you want to say, and then plan where you want to say it.

An editorial calendar is a good way to start planning your content. Be sure to include information sharing for events like board decisions and your budget process.

What is your goal? For schools, the primary goals are to build trust and support among your community, especially your voters.

Own your media

The Web has significantly expanded opportunities for content marketing. Websites and blogs allow anyone to own media and curate and produce content. Going digital means you do not have to wait for media coverage. You decide what to share and when to share it.

All school districts have a website, but many aren't using them to effectively tell their stories and engage their community. This is often a problem of lack of staff resources to report the story, take the photo and post the news online. For those districts, adding content like videos is out of the question, at least initially.

If possible, don't leave your stories untold. Even a minimal plan is better than no plan. Although it would be ideal to have someone on staff who could do this, possible alternatives are for volunteers or students to gather news for your website. An amateurish story is still engaging if there are personal connections to the subject – updates on students in your community, for example. And a less than professional student-written story has an additional hook if it is a showcase for student work.

Just be sure to provide enough details about what is happening to make it worth reading, and be sure that there is a visible subject in your photo, not a scatter shot of a room or event.

For a helpful reference, see the Content Marketing Institute's Webpage Content Template: *(<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Web-Copy-Template-Allure-New-Media.pdf>)*

Photo tips

See News Photography for Non-Photographers (PPT): *www.powershow.com/view/cc36-YjIIY/News_Photography_for_NonPhotographers_powerpoint_ppt_presentation*

A good photo adds to the story, tells a story without words, gives context, is compelling and

shows action and/or has a specific, easily identifiable subject. With these tips in mind, you do not need a fancy DSLR camera. A cellphone will work, but be sure to have high enough resolution to also meet your print quality needs if you plan to add it to print as well as digital content.

Video tips

Videos are a growing source of content, and mobile (streaming) video traffic through tools like Vine and Instagram make it easy to produce and share. Consider this:

- “Two-thirds of the world’s mobile data traffic will be video by 2017.”
- “Instagram videos are creating two-times more engagement than Instagram photos.”

(http://digiday.com/brands/15-stats-vine-and-instagram-video/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=Digiday%20Brands%20Newsletter&utm_campaign=Brands_Sailthru_July2013)

Instagram and Vine are relatively new video apps. If your website can support streaming video, they may be a good way to introduce fun video glimpses of your programs. Vine videos are only six seconds; Instagram videos are 15 seconds.

If you want to expand your video to tell a slightly longer story, keep these tips in mind:

Vary your shots. Some options are:

- Establishing or wide shot
- Wide shot
- Mid shot
- Medium close up
- Close up
- Extreme close up
- Cut-in
- Two-person shot
- Over the shoulder shot

(<https://vimeo.com/videoschool/lesson/101/varying-your-shot-composition>)

Don’t forget audio. Viewers are more forgiving of shaky video than poor audio quality.

Keep it short. Two minutes should be the maximum length for most videos. The longer the video, the more likely people will lose interest and click away.

Don’t forget to post your video on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube/Vimeo, your blog, etc. You can’t plan for a viral video, but you never know what may happen if you tell a good story and share it.

One of the best examples of content marketing in education is the viral Kid President video series (www.kidpresident.com/), which started as one marketing video for Freed-Hardeman University (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kid_President). New episodes are now posted every week, and the videos have had millions of views.

Resources

100 Content Marketing Examples

http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Ultimate_eBook_mayrev.pdf

Vimeo Video School

<https://vimeo.com/videoschool>

Content marketing

October 2013

Page 4

How to Use Story: 10 Points from Steve Stockman's Workshop @VIMEO Festival

www.stevestockman.com/how-to-use-story/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SteveStockman+%28Steve+Stockman+%7C+How+to+Shoot+Video+that+Doesn%27t+Suck%29

Likes & Tweets: leveraging social media for news sites, J Lab, Knight Community News Network

www.kcnn.org/socialmedia/starting_with_the_basics

Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant



On Call

Use your survey data to build an effective communications plan

After conducting a community survey, don't put it on a shelf. Use the results to plan an effective year-round communications program.

Once the survey results are in and the analysis of the results is complete, be sure the data includes:

A careful review of the survey demographics to determine who's who in your community and how many community members each group represents.

What each group's attitudes are about your district, its operations and programs.

Who votes when a school issue is on the ballot.

Which groups should be a top communications priority.

Then do an even deeper analysis to determine how to reach each group with messages that resonate with that specific audience.

Who is your audience and how do they get their information?

Your survey should tell you about your audiences, how they get their information and, more importantly, how they would prefer to get their information. The communications preferences can be sorted by audience characteristics such as age, gender and parent/non-parent status.

A careful examination of the data will help you divide the audience into different groups and tailor your communications to their preferences. Your survey results will tell you what information different audiences want to receive and how they want to receive it. Senior citizens, usually your frequent voters, might want more mailings or news media because they do not have children in school. Parents might want more information directly from school staff.

This knowledge is the basis for an effective communications plan that brings a maximum return on your communications investment and leads to greater community support

Regular surveys help you keep up with public opinion

Consider doing a survey annually if budget allows. If not, then at least every other year. Community opinion changes over time due to your diligent efforts to keep people informed and circumstances beyond your control.

Preferences for communication channels may change over time as well. Senior citizens,

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact:
Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information,
contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors'
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

(Over)

for example, are becoming more familiar and comfortable with new communication technologies, which may affect their communication habits. As they become more and more tech savvy, you should be in touch with their preferences.

A regular survey will keep you in touch with changes in your community. It will also give you a longitudinal look at the data that will help you determine if your communications strategies are effective. A communication plan should be a living, growing document. Survey data keeps your communication plan alive.

Put your effective communications plan in place

The following communications planning form will get you started. The format is designed to help you think about your research, audiences, messages and ways to evaluate results. An easy way to start building a comprehensive, year-round plan is to use a form like this for small communications projects. Using this method, you will gradually build a plan that includes all of those projects and helps reflect the big picture in your comprehensive plan.

As you build your plan, keep in mind it is better to complete one strategic action 100 percent, than list 10 strategic actions and only complete each one 10 percent.

After you complete one of the plan's actions, you may want to add two more columns. Label the first column "Actual evaluation" and the second column "What now?"

Using as much concrete data as possible, evaluate the action to determine if the results are what you desired.

This will turn your communications plan into a living, evolving document that brings proven results for you and your organization.

Contributed by Jeanne Magmer, communications consultant

Communications planning form

Target Audience:

Research we have about this group and what it tells us:

Primary messages to deliver to this audience:

Strategic Actions for Reaching This Group	Responsible Person(s)	Timeline		Desired outcome	How we will evaluate the results
		Start	Complete		
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					



On Call

Using social media for professional development

Educational professional development is not just training for teachers. In a growing number of districts, professional development is expanding to principals and other school administrators.

Many of the newest and best training tools can be found online. As the authors of *No Dream Denied* by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future put it, "Technology is perhaps the most important-and most underutilized-tool for providing access to the targeted professional development they need, when and how they need it. Online courses, informal support groups, and other network-supported resources open the door to professional development opportunities far beyond what any school or district might be able to offer." (http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/no-dream-denied_summary_report.pdf)

According to a national survey of teachers in professional development programs, sharing best practices increases teachers' knowledge and skills. It has a substantial positive influence on change in teacher practice. (www.edgateway.net/cs/wrel/view/lib/24)

Benefits of Technology for Professional Development

- Using technology for professional reasons can improve fluency in social media and using social media is good technology practice.
- Technology provides a personal or self-directed approach to professional development, which allows you to focus on areas you believe are most useful for your career and profession, not simply the courses available through your employer.
- Social media frees you from time and place constraints, allowing you to fit professional development into the limited time you have available wherever you are, including while waiting for medical appointments.
- By learning and using social media skills, you also become more able to understand and relate to youth who are just entering the workforce. Keeping up with new skills and trends is important as more and more tech-savvy youth enter the workforce.

Ways to Use Social Media for Professional Development

According to SimpleK12, an online teacher learning community, using social media is a great way to stay up to date on all the latest events in education. Using Twitter and Facebook to connect with like-minded learning professionals and actively following bloggers in the field are great tools for finding and learning from peers.

You can use your social media connections and education blogs to find out about education webinars and local networking events. Google+'s Hangout feature allows video conferencing for up to 10 people. It's a great way to bounce around ideas, find out what teachers and

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of On Call are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.

For content questions contact: Marcia Latta
Communications Consultant
(503) 580-2612.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at
(800) 562-8927 or
(360) 493-9231.

**October
2013**

Washington State
School Directors'
Association
221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516

(Over)

principals need and want, as well as offer solutions to existing problems. For the complete list, see (<http://blog.simplek12.com/social-media/10-ways-to-use-social-media-for-professional-development/>).

Getting Started with Social Tools

Jay Bernhardt, PhD, MPH, Center for Digital Health and Wellness, offers a primer for professionals interested in the basics of starting out with Twitter and LinkedIn for professional development, including suggestions for joining groups of like-minded professionals: <http://www.slideshare.net/jaybernhardt/bernhardt-social-media-slides-sophe-2013>

Professional Development Resources

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities has put together an amazing list of online professional development resources for teachers and administrators (<http://nichcy.org/schools-administrators/staffdevelopment>). The list has extensive professional development resources, including mentoring, state-specific and course-specific training, and teaching students with disabilities and is not limited to educators in the special education fields:

- **The National Standards**
www.nbpts.org/
A great place to start for administrators or teachers interested in learning the national requirements for educators.
- **The National Staff Development Council: Learning forward**
www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm
If you want to know about staff development, NSCD is an absolute must.
- **The Regional Labs**
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/>
This network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories, serving geographic regions that span the nation, works to ensure that those involved in educational improvement have access to the best available information, including resources like a step-by-step guide for schools and districts interested in implementing a professional development program (www2.learningpt.org/catalog/item.asp?SessionID=495102487&productID=4).
- **Professional development for special educators.**
www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Professional_Development
Most of The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)'s materials and videos are appropriate for learning how to address the educational needs of children with disabilities, but CEC also offers an entire service devoted to professional development.
- **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).**
www.ascd.org/professional-development.aspx
ASCD is a nonprofit that represents superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members, addressing all aspects of effective teaching and learning, such as professional development, educational leadership, and capacity building. ASCD offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities.
- **AFT and NEA Resources**
AFT: www.aft.org/issues/teaching/profdevel/index.cfm

NEA: www.nea.org/assets/img/content/espaction.pdf

The two largest teacher membership groups, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, have their own plentiful resources as well.

NEA also offers online courses through the NEA Academy (www.neacademy.org/) and the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education awards close to 200 grants to support educators' efforts to close the achievement gaps, develop creative learning opportunities for students, and enhance their own professional development (www.nfie.org/)

Between building connections with administrators and education professionals across the globe and benefitting from their experience and expertise, to finding and using online videos, classes and seminars, social media is an amazing tool for professional development. Adding social media to your professional toolkit can enable you to be a better teacher, paraprofessional or administrator, which is good news any day of the week.

Contributed by Megan Wilson, communications consultant

INSIGHTS

FOR FAMILIES



Parents' Guide to the Common Core



**October
2013**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Do you know what the Common Core is? Many parents, and even school staff, do not. Most students don't know about the Common Core either, but it is shaping curriculum in almost every state.

The Common Core State Standards are new, more difficult academic standards for language arts and math. Sponsored by the National Governors Association, they have been adopted by all but four states. The goal is to ensure that students receive a high-quality education regardless of where they live and if they change schools.

The Common Core is moving into classrooms across the country, but recent polls by Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup have found that a majority of the public do not know what it is. Sixty-two percent of the general public and 55 percent of K-12 parents had never heard of the Common Core (<http://bit.ly/184KljC>).

This will change as the standards are implemented and schools share more information about their educational programs. In the meantime, parents can start learning about these standards online.

There are many resources on the Web about the Common Core that provide tips to help parents support their children.

Check your state department of education's website for state-specific information about the Common Core State Standards.

A Parent's Guide to the Common Core Standards

www.education.com/magazine/article/parents-guide-to-common-core-standards/

This is a good overview for parents about the Common Core State Standards.

Parents' Guide to Student Success, National PTA

www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583

Available in both English and Spanish, these two- or four-page guides outline what children will learn in language arts and math by the end of each grade level. The guides also provide tips for helping your child learn at home.

Common Core State Standards Mission Statement:

"The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy."

—www.corestandards.org/

(Over)

Scholastic has a good website about the Common Core for educators called Common Sense for the Common Core. The classroom materials and instructional tools are too detailed to be useful to parents, but there are recommended book lists. Parents can get a good idea of appropriate nonfiction and literature for children at each grade level. Exposure to these books will aid comprehension on classroom assessments. www.scholastic.com/commoncore/common-core-book-list-nonfiction.htm

Scholastic has published specific information for parents:

Five tips to help you support the Common Core at home

www.scholastic.com/commoncore/common-core-for-parents.htm

1. Talk about books, especially the great ones.

The Common Core says that children need to read “books worth reading.” This is where the focus on nonfiction comes in, but high-quality literature is also important. The main point, however, is to motivate kids to read.

2. Ask your children questions about what they’re reading.

Reading skills are important, but demonstrating reading skills is a Common Core requirement. Students must be able to cite evidence from their reading to show comprehension. Ask questions about kids’ books and have them give reasons for their answers.

3. Push your kids to read nonfiction.

Children’s books typically engage young imaginations. Bedtime stories and early reading texts are generally fiction. As mentioned earlier, nonfiction, or “informational text” is a key part of the standards. Students will be exposed to more nonfiction in class. To support this transition, help your student find books about his or her favorite sports, hobbies, public figures, etc.

4. Encourage your kids to write, write, write.

A greater emphasis will be placed on the link between reading and writing, especially persuasive writing. Introduce new opportunities for your children to write through journaling, letter writing, blogging and email.

5. Talk math with your kids.

Math skills are a big part of the Common Core standards, but students need to learn more than the multiplication factors and how to add, subtract and divide. At each level, they do lessons that support the following Mathematical Practices:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

<http://bit.ly/lV4m4q>