



# Board of Directors Professional Development **Board and School Leader Communications**

 **THE  
CHARTER  
COLLABORATIVE**  
SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY  
*advancing public education through charter school partnerships*

# COMMUNICATION

Good communication takes TIME but can also save MORE TIME down the road.

- **Board** ↔ **School Leader**
- **Board** ↔ **Staff and Parents**
- **School Leader** ↔ **Administrative Team/Staff**
- **School Leader/Staff** ↔ **Parents**

## EXAMPLE:

- Best practice is for school leader to provide board with written communication no less than monthly. Can be weekly/bi-weekly depending on activity. This is what I refer to as “Friday Notes.” A meaningful communication should include:
  - Future possible decision options to start thinking about
  - Upcoming agenda items of importance
  - Issues that occur at school that are important or may get out in the community
  - Rumors or other concerns including whether true or not and how they are being handled
  - Personnel issues or concerns
  - Positive happenings at the school

# COMMUNICATION

Examples of Meaningful Techniques/Methods to Communicate:

- There should be good two-way communication between board members and school leader on concerns, issues, rumors, in the school and community.
- Board members, school leader, and staff should follow the chain of command/process for handing concerns and problems (i.e., board members should not go directly to teachers with a parent concern but to the director. The director has responsibility to investigate and communicate appropriately to all parties involved).
- Regular teacher communicate with parents about their children.
- Regular, timely communication between school leader, staff, and parents on a multitude of items such as student issues, changes in school policies, etc.
- Regular Parent/Staff Newsletters at a building and classroom level.
- Friday Notes from the school leader to board members.

# COMMUNICATION

## Important Stakeholders to Consider in Communications

- Parents
- Non-parent taxpayers
- Civic organizations
- Reporters (media)
- Neighborhood improvement groups
- City/state/federal government
- Business community
- Minority organizations
- Recreation organizations
- Religious/church groups
- Activists
- Vendors
- Police/health/fire departments
- Other

It is also important to know and communicate with State and Federal legislators, and local leaders such as mayors, township supervisors, and other elected officials regarding questions, ideas, concerns, and pending or current legislation or requirements that impact your school(s).

# CASE DISCUSSION

You are grocery shopping on a Saturday with your spouse when you bump into a member of the community.

Generally, the conversation is small talk but at the end, the individual alludes that some staff and parents that he has been talking to have said they do not like the school leader and want him gone because he never includes parents in making curriculum decisions or even communicates to them and he is allowing teachers to hand out condoms to middle school and high school students. The individual says that you need to do something about this.

What do you say to this person and how do you handle the situation?

# COMMUNICATION

## **Public schools have a responsibility to:**

- Be open/accountable to the parents and the community.
- Seek stakeholder input.
- Share the good news about students/programs.
- Encourage parent involvement in the education process.
- In addition, communication is a two-way street. A best practice is to annually survey parents about the school including but not limited to curriculum, teaching practices, facilities, programs, and responsiveness.

# CASE DISCUSSION

The parents of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Evergreen Academy have been complaining for the past month that their daughter is being bullied at school and on social media. The bullying includes both physical and emotional incidents and is coming from a group of girls in the same classroom. The bullying has continued, and they have had it. They tell the school leader that they have gone to the news media and contact a lawyer about the inaction of administration in addressing the bullying. For its part, administration has not been able to confirm all of the incidents at school but have addressed one incident with a suspension. The local news station airs a story about the bullying interviewing the mom from outside the school building. The news station wants to interview the school leader and contacts a board member at home.

What, when, and to whom should the school leader communicate? What communication should come from board members?

# Questions

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