



Talking the Walk

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Key Messages about public education can be most effectively communicated throughout the state if school leaders are actively sharing those messages within their own communities and are preparing staff and board members to do the same.

INVESTMN is a collaborative initiative of MASA, MASSP, and MESPA (professional associations for Minnesota’s superintendents, secondary and elementary principals, respectively) that will provide regular editions of talking points on key messages to be used by education leaders in local conversations and presentations. The success of this initiative and its influence on funding and public policy will depend upon the commitment of education leaders to use the materials provided with their stakeholders and legislators.

Minnesota depends on you to explore and expand opportunities for improved student success. Minnesota also needs you to explore and expand opportunities to build community and political support for schools. The data is clear and compelling that in schools with strong stakeholder relationships and involvement, kids do better academically and socially. The success of *your* schools and *our* state may depend upon your ability to engage your community—from parents to politicians, from students to senior citizens, from cooks to clerks—in visioning, supporting and creating a better future. They are the owners of our future. You are the architects.

Communications and public relations and communications progress can be difficult to benchmark because they are part of everything you do. We have provided a few questions to help you see progress in your efforts and identify new opportunities. To see the changes from year to year, rank yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest) on the following measures of effective school communications. The first bar is for 2008-09 and the second bar is for 2009-10.

1. I identify and honor clear public relations expectations for myself by:
 - Preparing an annual (updated weekly) calendar of events, communications, workshops, etc.
 - Identifying constituent(s) groups and creating opportunities to reach out to, listen to, and engage all of them.
 - Visiting my professional organization’s (MESPA) Web site and the **INVESTMN** link for issues, information, tips and ideas.

2008-09	<i>(lowest)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>(highest)</i>
2009-10	<i>(lowest)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>(highest)</i>

2. I identify and honor clear public relations expectations for staff by:
 - Equipping staff with the expectations, training, and information to be effective public relations agents for the district.
 - Beginning to establish expectations as early as the job interview process for prospective staff. (Examples: describe a successful parent/teacher school conference; Describe the public relations role of a district employee.)
 - Incorporating public relations questions into all staff employment reviews.

2008-09 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)
 2009-10 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)

3. I keep myself updated on current and emerging issues and identify those most likely to impact my school community and attach a level of urgency to each by:
 - Participating in professional workshops, mentorships, discussion groups, etc.
 - Reading professional organizations' periodicals and Web sites (see **INVESTMN**)
 - Having focused, meaningful regular dialogues about current issues with colleagues from other districts/schools.

2008-09 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)
 2009-10 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)

4. I make the commitment to invest in Minnesota by:
 - Helping others to do the same by helping them to identify the benefits, and become aware of the risks if we fail to do so.
 - Providing meaningful opportunities for people to become informed and stay engaged. (Studies consistently show that those most closely connected to schools have the highest regard for schools.)

2008-09 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)
 2009-10 (lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (highest)

There is a persistent lack of accurate information about the challenges, funding, and progress of our public schools. As actress and comedienne Lily Tomlin once said, *"I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody."*

Talk the walk, and remember: you are somebody!

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