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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT BOOSTER

Welcoming Schools

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Public schools are just that. Public. The future success of K-12 education depends on how much the public is willing to invest. Public support, or lack thereof, will determine opportunities for America's children, the quality of teachers in classrooms, materials to spark learning, class sizes, salaries, facilities, and everything else associated with public education. In the competitive environment of private schools, on-line schools, open enrollment, and home schooling, among others, maintaining lowans' commitment may be a challenge. Everything we do seems to be under the microscope. This Booster examines what we know about the public's feelings toward public school, examples of relationship building and how we can welcome the public into our schools, engaging the very folks we depend on for long-term survival. With the same conscious intention used to deliver a great education to every student, we can put on our best face with our best foot moving forward.

What do citizens think about public education?

The [Gallup organization](#) provides public opinion polls on a variety of topics.

Currently over half of Americans are dissatisfied with the quality of public education students receive in K-12. In a long term poll starting in May of 1973, Gallup asked respondents this question: How much confidence do you, yourself, have in public schools – a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little? In response to that 1973 question, 58% of the respondents said they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in public schools. When that same question was asked in June of 2016, only 30% responded they had quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in public education. A myriad of polls are available related to issues with which schools are dealing - common core, testing, and vouchers among others.

These many polls suggest there are a variety of opinions related to American public schools and not all of them positive. We must do more than ask questions to move the support needle in the right direction.

Opinions on education result from an assortment of issues, some national, some state, and some local. For the last 20 years with the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1994, the achievement of all students has been under a microscope. Prior to that, the public hadn't seen and schools hadn't shared much about the students who struggled in public schools, so this new information drew public, political and media attention. America and Iowa's population is aging; 75% of households do not have school-aged children, so fewer people have a tangible connection to school. These folks most likely don't attend ball games, science fairs, school plays, or other school events. Their information about school may come from what they read and hear in the press, which is at times negative and may or may not have local relevance. It may come from what they hear at their coffee groups or a meeting, which may or may not be true. It might be about controversial issues like bullying, the very rare violent act, or the common core, which become political key messages. It might come from a neighbor who is employed at the school who is unhappy in her position and chooses to share that information with others. Sadly, information about local schools often doesn't come from the school and all of us can improve how we tell our stories of excellence and success, as well as truth-telling about our challenges.

Why is public education important?

Public schools have played an enormous role in the development of America. [The Center for Public Education](#) provides an excellent synopsis of the value and history of public education. Think about what these principles mean for America and how it would be different if Americans held different values about education:

- A tuition-free education for all students.
- The promise of equal educational opportunities no matter race, religion or ability.
- A commitment to high standards and high expectations for all students.
- A system of governance that ensures public accountability.
- A benefit to society by teaching democratic principles and common values.

Author and attorney Scott Trurow notes, "Widespread public access to knowledge, like public education, is one of the pillars of our democracy, a guarantee that we can maintain a well-informed citizenry."

How can support for public education be enhanced?

People who support public education must inform communities about how public education works best, how the local school is doing, challenges in the educational system, and needed action to address problems. The supporters must in turn listen to their communities about the values they hold related to public education and how the community members would like to help the school. Communication isn't a one-way street. Think about what Steven Covey said in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Consider this real story that occurred in an Iowa school.

Joan Sparland: A Welcoming Face at Beaver Creek Elementary

Every single day, John, the father of two elementary boys, called Sarah, the curriculum director, and ranted about the district reading program, which he thought was awful and she knew was getting results. At first Sarah argued with John and even hung up on him a couple of times. That strategy, to no one's surprise, didn't work. John felt unheard and got angrier. Sarah became more frustrated. After a couple of weeks, Sarah decided she would just listen. Sarah learned that John and his family had come back to his home town when he had been diagnosed with incurable cancer. He and his wife left their successful careers to ensure their children had the quality education John felt he'd received while growing up in this Iowa town. He liked the idea of being able to call "school people" (as he described them) and address his concerns related to education. She realized that John and his wife were putting their hearts and souls into the future of their children now, knowing he wouldn't be around to help them later. From John's comments, Sarah deduced that communication to parents about the reading program was lacking and led John and his wife to believe that they were ignoring some of the critical elements of reading instruction which Sarah knew that teachers and the principal were committed to deliver. Sarah determined the community needed more information in order to understand what was really going on in reading to confirm progress was being made. In fact, they were making much better progress than they had five years previously. She learned the district needed to do a much better job of communicating how they were teaching reading, why they were doing it that way, and that they were getting results. Most importantly, she learned that listening intently and purposefully could help solve the problem at hand.

As Iowa prepares for a new and more rigorous state assessment beginning in the Spring of 2018, we will all be well served to engage in more listening and plan consciously how best to communicate about transitions, staff support, and student success.

Look in the Mirror

If schools looked in the mirror at the face they present to the public, what would they see? Do they see a welcoming place where students, volunteers, employees and school board members work together, communicate well, and speak positively to each other and to the public? A place where problems are acknowledged, tackled and jointly solved? Buildings that are well maintained and in which the community feels pride? A place the public is proud to say, "This is our school and we are glad to support it with our time, our advocacy, and our resources."

"Ask Joan. She'll know."

"Joan made me feel better today."

"Don't worry. Joan will make sure I get signed up for that."

"Joan likes my haircut."

Joan, Joan, Joan – her name can be heard throughout the hallways and classrooms at Beaver Creek Elementary in Johnston. The woman kids, teachers, and parents speak of is Joan Sparland – the professional, smart, and highly organized administrative assistant serving a building of approximately 735 PreK – 5 students in the Johnston Community School District.

There used to be more office support, but when budgets tightened up, Joan took on more responsibility, knowing that saved resources in the front office went to supporting student needs. When time allows, building paraprofessionals lend a hand, supporting front office work and teacher needs. Joan is a team player, managing to get enormous amounts of work done with good humor and a kind smile.

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Or would that mirror instead picture a place where communication is limited and no one feels any compunction about speaking negatively about the district, including those who attend the school or work and volunteer there? Where people constantly complain about what the school is doing? A place where taxpayers doubt they're getting their money's worth? It's most likely that there are some from each camp in every school district, but with some intentional planning, it's possible to move people to the positive end of the spectrum. The public (and frankly students, employees, and volunteers) are like mirrors - they reflect back whatever they receive - happiness, gratitude, caring, pride, and warmth as well as terseness, bitterness, anger, intolerance or dismissal.

Every single person who attends, works or volunteers in public education, not just the superintendent or principals, but really everyone - students, teachers, non-certified staff, volunteers and others - can impact the public's view of the system in a variety of ways. The face a school offers is a collective picture and everyone needs to know they have a role in the public's perception. Schools must communicate information in a way that can be understood and appreciated. These suggestions are offered in a spirit of helping schools bridge those relationships between the school district and the public. Some of these suggestions are simple to implement. Others are a bit more difficult. Some schools may already implement all of the recommendations. Others may just be starting to tackle this task of how to project a more positive image to the community. If you have other ideas or actions that have worked well for your district, please share with us. We love to hear of and share your successes.

Develop and Implement a Communications Plan

As schools think about what they want to communicate to the public and how, it's time to develop those ideas into a plan. If schools are not sure where to start, look at the Iowa School Public Relations Association (ISPR) [website](#) for some resources or contact ISFIS for help (515) 251-5970 or Marissa@iowaschoolfinance.com. This newsletter doesn't provide any direction for a solid plan, just some general ideas and examples of what schools are doing to improve communication internally and to the public. Perhaps these ideas will spark your thinking as you develop or improve your plan.

For starters, it's important to tell people what's going on at school. That seems a rather simple suggestion, but it's not always happening. Provide the information in ways different demographic groups can access. Websites, Facebook, Twitter, electronic backpacks and other outlets are must-dos in this current electronic age, but don't forget pamphlets placed strategically where people gather (cafes, the doctor's office, human services agencies, the local chamber office, etc.), the local newspapers, radio stations, and other more traditional communication modes for those who don't access the Web.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWEA) offered a report entitled [The Power of Public Relations in Schools](#). This report will help schools think about the effective communication strategies and practices. Here are a few highlights, but we suggest your team review the report and discuss them in context:

1. Offer frank communication about issues of concern. The public wants to know how you're addressing problems and that you're not just ignoring them.
2. Meet with business leaders about how schools are funded, what you're doing with the resources you have, and find common interests.
3. When a new baby is born or a new family moves into the district, the superintendent (or the school district) might send a note congratulating the family and expressing excitement about another member of the class of 2033. Include a flyer about the district in the note. (Our additional thoughts: it's never too early to think about the parent's role in early literacy and preschool options.)

Social Media

When developing a social media plan, there are questions that must be considered about the social media platforms you intend to use: What is our purpose in using this tool? Who is going to manage the social media accounts? Who will set them up? Who will post? Will there be more than one person who can post? What kind of information do we want to post? Do we have a plan for posting? How often? You will most likely come up with other organizational questions as you discuss this with a team, but do discuss it with a team that includes students. Don't just turn it over to one person. This is a time to include multiple perspectives.

While there are exceptions, a quick scan of Iowa school district Facebook pages show some interesting anecdotal data. Some school districts have a district FB page on which individual schools share what's going on. In some instances, buildings have their own FB page. Some pages have been started but are rarely updated. Generally, there is a huge focus on sports, not a bad idea, but how can academics and the arts be celebrated too? A quick search of the Internet found some helpful ideas. This [post at Edutopia](#) recommended these ideas and others:

1. Share the school calendar.
2. Link to positive stories.
3. Post photos of events.
4. Congratulate students and staff who achieve something.
5. Feature alumni.
6. Create video or written Q and A with students on various topics.

Take a look at this [Twitter Quick Guide](#). It can help schools think about the questions they should be considering related to Twitter accounts.

Another thought related to social media posts: how about an "event of the day," something that's quick, a post that readers come to expect and look for, and is easy to post and highlight? Focus on positive events going on in school or something that alumni have accomplished.

Greeting and Visiting with Guests

When people are guests in homes and businesses, courtesies are extended to them. The guests are greeted, engaged in conversation, asked if they wish to be seated, and sometimes offered refreshments, among other pleasantries. Think about how that might play out in a school building. While schools are busy places and can't always be as accommodating, think about how colleagues treat each other and how guests are treated in your school. With increased levels of security, safety precautions and new limitations on access, it's even more important that our regular positive actions balance out the appearance of searching for the rare negative actor.

Here are some examples of communication. Think about the impression each leaves with a guest:

- A faculty group is gathered for a guest speaker during the school day. Faculty members visit in conversational voices during the speaker's remarks, read the newspaper, and check papers. The speaker wonders if those behaviors are acceptable in classrooms.
- Guests are greeted immediately in the office with "How may I help you?"
- A visitor walks through a building passing many people and isn't greeted or welcomed by anyone.
- A parent or a teacher is visiting with the principal who leaves the door open. Everyone who passes by can hear the conversation.
- A guest has an appointment with the principal who is running late. Front office staff apologizes and asks the guest to be seated and if they would like water or coffee while they

- Parents are waiting in line at school conferences to talk to one teacher who is backed up with an hour wait.
- A student or employee ushers a guest to the part of the building where they need to go, making pleasant, quiet conversation as they walk through the building.

How does your school greet and accommodate guests? Have you thought it through and are you intentional in your actions? Which of these examples are familiar? How do you want guests to feel when they arrive? Have you established procedures for greeting guests?

Signs

Many schools communicate directions and required procedures through posted signage. Consider the tone and condition of the signs; does the tone communicate the welcoming message? Since this is a time when buildings are locked and all visitors to the building must sign in, we have a big challenge to overcome in helping visitors feel welcome. Here's one example seen in an Iowa school. "All visitors must sign in at the office. No Exceptions." Here's another example. "We are glad you've come to visit. Please come to the office to sign in and let us know you've arrived so we can help you." What do the signs in your school say? Are they fresh and easy to read or tattered and faded? Do they welcome your guests? Apply to signage what we have learned through Positive Behavioral Supports; informing people what the right steps are generates better compliance than negative prohibitions and threats.

It also wouldn't hurt to add an explanation on your school website, your Facebook page, and in the superintendent's column in the local newspaper about why the doors are locked and why people have to buzz to get into a public building. Something like this might work:

You're welcome to enter the school buildings, but because of safety concerns, the XYZ Community School District, like most school districts in the country, must be locked when we're in session. We are committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and even you as the visitor. Just ring the buzzer and we will let you in. Then please come to the office so we can help you find what you're looking for. Thanks for understanding. We'll be glad to see you!

How Buildings Look to the Public

While it's hard to keep buildings filled with students in tip-top shape, it's important that visitors see well cared for buildings. Sometimes those who live or work in a building get so used to how things look that the areas that need some updates aren't noticed. The public will notice, so it's important to keep things clean and in good repair. One school invited a group of citizens in to "inspect the buildings and grounds." The citizens were so pleased to be asked that the group arranged for local master gardeners to develop and tend to some floral school landscaping. Displaying student work in the building creates an environment focused on students. This shows the community a concrete example of all that's being accomplished at school. Walking down a hall with student art work, poetry, and messages of goals for success is far more interesting and inspiring than looking at bricks and mortar.

Email

Email is a great way to communicate quickly with parents and staff and patrons, but may also be a quick way to alienate individuals.

[Email Dos and Don'ts for Educators](#), by the Harvard Education Letter, explains how powerful email can be and explains tips for staff in communicating via email to avoid some of the negative consequences that might otherwise happen.

Check that your district/building has an email policy. How quickly is email to be returned? What happens if it isn't? Does your staff include a quote or signature statement on district email that could be offensive to a parent? Email is a terrific way to let parents know that their student may be slipping on a project that is due in a few days. If the project is late and the student gets a zero, if the email is the first outreach to a parent, it may be interpreted as too little too late. Email is also a way to give a student (and their parents) kudos for good behavior, stellar work, or just to let the folks at home know that their student is on task and working hard every day.

The Phone

Answering the phone and taking messages is often the first, and sometimes the only communication the school or district has with some patrons. It is generally appreciated by all when the people who answer the phone identify themselves by name and speak slowly and loudly enough to be heard. Answering the phone with a pleasant voice and an offer to help makes the caller feel as if it's okay to communicate with the school district. "This is Sheila Smith at XYZ Community School District. How may I help you?"

Sometimes when patrons call, the phone rings and rings and no one answers. Some know that generally means the person who usually answers is off taking lunch tickets or seeing to the needs of a child, but not everyone who calls the school understands the work demands of the front office. We suggest an answering machine that tells the caller just that. "Hello. This is Sheila Smith and I'm either taking lunch tickets or seeing to a student who needs help. We appreciate your call, so please leave your name, number and a brief message and we will return your call as soon as possible. Thanks!" Be sure to respond to the message and return the call. Question for self-inquiry; do you have a policy that sets an expectation of returning calls to parents or other patrons? Does your staff need additional support in complying with the expectation?

While school personnel know the energy it takes to get a message to a child or an adult, the public doesn't always understand that. Office staff occasionally complain about the number of calls from certain families and parents and the frustrating nature of the responsibility of taking care of everyone. Rather than letting that frustration overwhelm us, think of some strategies that might help all involved to best focus on the needs of the children for whom we are responsible. It would be okay to send a message home to families, post on the web page, and social media accounts and repeat when necessary. An example would be, "Most of our students feel better when they know what's going to happen at the end of the day – get on the bus, walk home, be picked up, etc. We know that family plans may occasionally change. Plans change in our families as well. We just wanted to let you know that the sooner we know of your changes, the more likely it is that we can get the message to your child in a timely fashion, and be sure to monitor them so they get to where they need to be. Thanks for sticking to the routine as much as possible and if that can't happen, providing information to us as soon as you can."

Outreach

Here are some other ideas. There are certainly many other ways, but we're hoping these spark your thinking.

Get the Public into our Public Schools

Our public schools are community assets, but with concerns about safety and damage to the school facility itself, we sometimes close off access to the public. Some good tips for getting the public into our public schools might be some or all of these:

- Hold a final rehearsal for the high school play, orchestra or band concert, or vocal music concert, and invite senior patrons to attend for free. Make sure there is parking available close to the auditorium and distribute a flier about the district and how the school is doing to

- Create learning opportunities for community members. One district in Iowa had declining enrollment and needed a bond issue passed, but couldn't get patrons to understand their need. They established a program for anyone in the community to take a high school class which had a few empty seats in the room (computer science, US history, literature, etc.) and charged the member \$25 for participating (and yes, they had to run a background check.) They even included the names of the adults on the roster at graduation to celebrate their lifelong learning. The community members got to experience high school students in the classroom first hand and learned respect for educators as well as established relationships with students.
- Invite community members to judge the science fair projects or read to students, or fill any other need the district has. Have an artist of the day come in and work with students on art projects and creativity. Invite a legislator or city council member to talk to students about government and democracy. Ask community members for help; volunteers can be great ambassadors for the great work of students and the school.
- What interesting ideas do you have to get the public in our public schools? Let us know. We want to hear about and share your stories.

Written Materials

- A school brochure that's bright, engaging and filled with information about the school and the community(ies) it serves. How many students? How many people in the area? What are highlights you want readers to know about? It might be a good project for a graphic arts and communication class to put together. It could be distributed to new families and businesses and any other group that would appreciate some general knowledge about the school district.
- Be sure when citizens volunteer to help with something at school - time at a track meet, listen to students read, bring food for a class event - that they are thanked in writing on school stationary or school note cards. One citizen had been timing at a track meet for years. The new Activities Director sent him a written thank you note, something he'd never received in the previous 15 years he'd been timing. That citizen has proclaimed he will do whatever needs to be done now. Thank you notes go a long way in building trust and support.
- School employees or students might write a column in the local newspaper, also posted on the district website, Facebook page, and other social media sites, about what's going on at school.
 - Have a teacher write about an academic area, for instance how spelling is taught in 2016. Have that teacher acknowledge that it may not be just like the citizens in the town were taught spelling, but they aren't driving 1960 cars either. Be sure the teacher cites a little research and tells about his or her own results with local students. Keep the tone light and try not to use educational jargon. While jargon may be great for communicating with other professionals, it's confusing to an audience not familiar with the education language.
 - Have the school journalism class interview the maintenance director and write about the work done over the summer and what that will mean for students when they come back to school. Freshly painted rooms? Clean and shining floors? Newly painted parking space divisions? A better auditorium or new computer lab? And then invite the community to come out and take a look.

- Have the head of nutrition write about the nutritional guidelines that are followed and how they are contributing to the good health of students. Compare what students eat at school now to when they served less healthy options. Be sure to have the writer include information about how many lunches they turn out each day and other data that local citizens might find interesting.
- Invite a student to write a column about a challenging assignment. Ask them to describe what it was, the kind of help they received from the teacher in completing it, and what they learned along the way.

Community Meetings

- Establish a School Speakers' Bureau. Most local organizations are looking for programming.
 - The superintendent would be a wonderful resource to the community for explaining how school funding works. It's complicated and hardly anyone understands the elements, such as the fact that sales tax money can't be spent for salaries.
 - Most people connect with the district through activities. Have the Activities Director explain all the events that go on, what has to be done for them to occur, and data connected with kids participating in activities, i.e. those kids participating in activities are more likely to participate in more challenging course work, have high grades and graduate.
- Hold Question and Answer coffees with designated topics like the condition of the buildings and grounds, grading processes, the importance of art, how students learn to read, etc. Hold them regularly, say once per month, either at a local café or at the school. Provide coffee, cookies, a big smile, and expertise in the area being discussed. The crowd may be small but the people who come will be those who are interested in school and most likely will spread the good news they hear. Listen intently to their comments.

Continued: Joan Sparland: A Welcoming Face at Beaver Creek Elementary

In addition to being a welcoming face for students, families, and visitors, Joan oversees the purchasing and delivery of school materials, manages student records, and assists in building the schedule.

Joan's upbeat attitude and work ethic is a reflection of building principal Eric Toot. Every email he sends has this statement, "A Culture of Excellence Where Students Come First." Eric lives that motto and is intentional about the tone at Beaver Creek. Whether the principal is intentional about tone as Eric is, or not, the tone of the building does come from the principal. Eric is a former guidance counselor and treats everyone - students, staff, and visitors - with dignity and respect. He's kind. He listens. Joan takes his lead seriously. She thinks of everyone who walks through the door – parents and grandparents, community members, the UPS carrier – as guests, and treats them accordingly. Eric, Joan, and other front office colleagues smile, ask if they can help, and always make me feel as if they are glad to see me. I leave Beaver Creek feeling as if my grandchildren are well taken care of – something every parent and grandparent wants to feel.

Joan grew up in Des Moines and attended Des Moines Public Schools. She went to Southern Methodist University and had a glamorous career early in her life – a buyer first for Macy’s and then Dayton-Hudson, the well-known Minnesota Department Store now owned by Macy’s. She traveled extensively for her job – Los Angeles six times a year, New York monthly, Asia, Europe. Glamorous, fun, pressure-filled. But then she decided love was more important and came back to Des Moines, married her high school sweetheart, and they started their life together. She went to work at Younkers as a buyer and the fun continued. But then she had a baby and she knew she wanted to spend her energy and time on Sam. Sam, who recently graduated from Iowa State with a double major in chemical engineering and biochemistry, started attending Beaver Creek in the third grade, so Joan decided to volunteer her time in his classroom and around the school. There was a need for a kindergarten paraprofessional; Eric recruited Joan for the position. After a year in kindergarten, Joan was asked to apply for the building administrative assistant position and the rest is history.

Joan’s early career no doubt prepared her to see everyone who walks through the doors of Beaver Creek as a customer. That’s unusual language for those of us who have spent all of our time in schools. But we are in a competitive environment where nonpublic schools, home school supports, online academies and even other school districts through open enrollment would love the opportunity to serve the students and the parents in our school districts. It’s not overt, but like a conscientious business person who believes in her product, Joan makes sure to do everything she can to help Beaver Creek students and parents feel as special as they are to her.

Joan’s commitment to children is evident in all she does. She remembers their interests and asks after them. She’s there because of the students and she reminds herself of that every day. It’s summer and she misses them – she’s already counting down to the first day of school. She doesn’t miss her old fancy job. It was great to do when she was young. But now, this job? This is far more rewarding. She said she loves being Sam’s mom and now she has a whole building of kids she can support in a role that requires mothering.

Joan remarks her biggest challenge is time. The idea that forgetful, overwhelmed parents or difficult kids might be her biggest challenge seemed never to occur to her. Time. Joan said her goal is to make Beaver Creek a haven for students and families. Her plate is full, but so is her heart. Like many of the schools across Iowa, Beaver Creek Elementary and the Johnston Community School District are fortunate to have one of the faces of their school be a committed, kind, hard-working, accommodating, and helpful employee like Joan.

Leadership Team Discussion

No communication plan can be developed by one person. When people come together with different life experiences to share how they access information and how they want to share their ideas, you'll begin to see how multi-faceted your communication strategies need to be. For starters, the leadership team should read the School Improvement Booster, which hopefully will spark thinking. Reflect on what you've read. Below are some questions you may want to discuss. The goal is to encourage school teams to be intentional about communication and building support for public education – not by hiding the challenges and only addressing the district's strengths, but rather by engaging citizens in seeing the school as an important public entity in which everyone has a stake, critical to the life and vibrancy of the community.

1. What aspect of the School Improvement Booster really caught your attention? How does it relate to your school?
2. What questions do you have related to this School Improvement Booster?
3. What ways do you intentionally communicate good news with the community?
4. What other avenues of communication are available that you haven't used?
5. What are your next steps?
6. Do we have a current communications' plan? Are we following it?
 - If we don't have one, how are we going to develop one? What are big areas we need to address in our plan? Do we need help?
 - If we do have one, have we updated it for social media, email and website best practices?
 - In either case, how do we know our communications are being received well by patrons?
7. Have we surveyed our public to see what they think about how we're doing? (There are free survey tools on line as well as questions related to education. Sometimes it's a good idea to look at already crafted questions and tailor what you find to your district.) Put them out at parent-teacher conferences. Take them to local coffee groups. Offer them up on your web page, Facebook page, and Twitter feed.
 - What issues do you feel we communicate thoroughly about related to school?
 - What are you interested in hearing more about?
 - What is the best way for us to communicate with you? (Email? Web page? Facebook? Twitter? Newspaper? Radio? Public get-togethers?)
 - What do school personnel do that make you feel welcome (or not) in the school district?
 - Would you like to volunteer at school? If so, what would you be interested in doing? Here are some areas where we need help: reading to students, tutoring in math at all levels, volunteers for athletic events (track timers, etc.), evaluating our landscaping and seeing if our buildings and grounds can be enhanced, providing school supplies or clothing to needy families, internships or mentors for high school students, etc. Other ideas that you have?
 - If you wanted to volunteer at school, how could we best reach out to you? (Email? Newspaper? Twitter? Facebook? Radio? Other?)

Quotes

“I think the one lesson I have learned is that there is no substitute for paying attention.”

Diane Sawyer

“Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.”

Yehuda Berg

“If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack. “

Winston Churchill

“Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.”

Rollo May

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw

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