



COMMUNICATION SWEET SPOT

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Everyone has probably heard the phrase “there is no such thing as over communication,” and although transparency is imperative, especially for a school district, over communication can be detrimental when trying to engage stakeholders. Over the past ten years, my district has struggled with the perils of both under and over communicating. Finding that communication “sweet spot” is always a work in progress. It takes a deliberate plan involving when to communicate, who communicates what, and how often to communicate.

When my district migrated to a new website and app notification system in 2018, it became a powerful tool to push information to our parents, staff, and community. Previously, our website was updated infrequently, resulting in parents going elsewhere to find information about the district. The new website and app allowed us to share innovative projects happening around our district in addition to basic information. As traffic to the new website increased, I quickly became inundated by teachers wanting to share stories and pictures of activities occurring in their classrooms.

While there is no better PR for a district than showcasing outstanding teacher and student achievement, it can become white noise if our stakeholders' phones are pinging every hour with a new notification about something happening in a classroom. Districts risk stakeholders either deleting the app or turning off notifications, which becomes just as detrimental as not sharing enough information.

Another challenge to balancing communication is maintaining

consistent forms of communication across the district. While sharing important information with families is crucial, communication through too many facets or in large quantities can be difficult to digest. Not to mention, if a building is sending too many emails in a week, it can be challenging for parents to find the specific piece of information they are looking for when they need it.

To address these over communication obstacles, it is essential to align expectations with each building administrator to delineate what types of information to share, on which platform, and when to communicate that with parents. Having as few classroom-parent communication systems across your district as possible is also helpful. If a parent has three children in three different schools, and each school has its own parent communication system, it can be challenging to learn and access each of them. This is why it is critical to have a consolidated district-wide communication system.