

Leading the Conversation

How to Communicate Effectively with Parents

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Where We Are At Today

We have a knowledge gap:

While the vast majority of educators are familiar with the Common Core State Standards, only **52% of adults** have heard about the Common Core State Standards.

What Do Parents Support?

65% of parents say having **one set of educational standards** across the country for reading, writing and math will have a positive impact on education in the United States.

What Do Parents Support?

66% of parents are favorable toward **standardized tests**, and favorability grows among African American parents (75%) and Hispanic parents (79%).

What Do Parents Support?

Only **1 in 3 voters** think there is **too much testing** during the school year.

**You are the
BEST
source of information!**



Developing Your Plan

The key ingredients:

- Set your goal
- Identify your audience
- Hone your message(s)
- Determine the best tactics or strategies
- Measure the results

Set Your Goal

Major activities and milestones:

- ⌘ The value of the assessment
- ⌘ The difference in test scores
- ⌘ The score release

Identify Your Audience

Be as specific as possible:

- ⌘ Not all parents are alike.
- ⌘ Think about all the different parents in your school and how you might communicate with them in different ways.
- ⌘ Think about which parents or families might be able to get messages to other parents.

Hone Your Messages

What message works best in your school?

Examples for the Standards:

- ⌘ These standards are consistent expectations and give all students the opportunity to succeed.
- ⌘ These standards are already working for our students. Let me give you an example from my school.

Hone Your Messages

Examples for the Assessment:

- ⌘ The new assessment will replace the old assessment.
- ⌘ The new assessment will measure real-world skills.
- ⌘ The new assessment is an academic checkup to help us see how your child is performing so we can better support him/her in the future.
- ⌘ This test is a better measure of your child's progress on the skills we know matter for success after high school.

Hone Your Messages

Examples for the Assessment (cont.)

- ⌘ These scores are a new baseline.
- ⌘ Scores will be different this year, and in many cases, not as many students will be on grade level.
- ⌘ These scores do not mean students learned less. It means we raised the bar.
- ⌘ Student achievement will improve over time. As with any change, there is a period of adjustment. We have to give teachers and students time to get used to the new standards and the new tests.

Determine the Best Tactics and Strategies

What is the best way to communicate with parents and families in your school?

⌘ Meet parents where they are:

- Send information home with students
- Post on your website
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Host a Family Night at your school

Determine the Best Tactics and Strategies

⌘ Resources are available:

- The Council of the Great City Schools (<http://www.cgcs.org>)
- The National PTA (<http://www.pta.org/commoncore>)
- PARCC (<http://www.parcconline.org/>)
- Reach out to other PARCC states (<http://www.ccsso.org/ccssforward>)

Determine the Best Tactics and Strategies

- ⌘ Work with your teachers, parents and students to create content for your own school.
 - Revise the messages based on parent input
 - Develop short videos to post on your website or social media

VIDEO EXAMPLES

⌘ Sabrina Brown-Robinson, special education curriculum specialist for District of Columbia Schools, stresses the importance of having high expectations for all students including students with disabilities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AhX3qgEf54>

⌘ Bonnie Hain, PARCC's Director of English Language Arts/Literacy Content: <http://www.parcconline.org/test-items-let-all-students-show-their-ability>

THE ACADEMIC CHECKUP

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT A GOOD TEST LOOKS LIKE?



Today, teachers are using higher standards in their classrooms. It's time to measure student learning in a new way. **Here's how to identify a good test from a bad one:**



Will your child succeed in college or career? **Testing only** means something if it is used to measure student progress towards high expectations that set them up, year after year, for success beyond high school.



Should your child's cousin in a neighboring city be held to lower expectations? **No way!** All kids, no matter their zip code, should have a fair test that levels the playing field and holds them to the same high benchmarks.



Gone are the days of guessing "C" on an answer sheet. **Good tests** ask students to use critical thinking and problem solving skills by showing their work and providing evidence for their answers.



Teachers are tasked with helping students reach higher expectations, and we expect them to be able to identify early warning signs when a student is behind. **Good tests** should give teachers the data they need to tailor instruction to the needs of their students.



Things parents should get out of good tests: timely feedback, easy results to discuss with their child's teacher, and cues as to how to support or challenge their child's learning at home. Things they shouldn't get: confusion, frustration and delayed results.

SICK OF TESTS THAT DON'T HELP YOU OR YOUR CHILD?

Across the country, we are finally moving to higher standards and the next generation of tests that will help our kids succeed and actually measure academic progress.

Share this infographic and find out more about how tests are changing to help student learning at action.stand.org/goodtests.



Measure the Results

- ⌘ Ask your parents!
- ⌘ Engage parents in the conversation today:
 - Focus groups
 - Pre-surveys and post-surveys
 - Social media
- ⌘ Use this opportunity to improve your school and district communications.