



Community Voice

Getting your message out

Getting the Conversation Going

Getting the conversation going on *Getting Your Message Out*

The following questions are designed to spark discussions at the school board level about the topics covered in the video series *Getting Your Message Out*. The exchange of ideas generated through these discussions, along with working through the resources that accompany some of the segments, will help school boards get the greatest value from this professional development resource.

The Role of a School Board

- What do our foundation statements—our mission, vision, mandate and beliefs—say about what we value as a school board?
- Does our day-to-day work, as reflected in our meeting agendas and other routine documents, reflect what we say we value?
- How well informed is our community about exactly what we do as a school board? What can we do to improve that understanding? And who's responsible—the board, administration, or both?

Working with the Media

- Who are our spokespeople for areas such as board decisions, operations, finance, or crisis situations? If these people are unavailable, have we designated someone to speak on their behalf?
- What are the major media outlets in our school division? Do they all focus on the same types of news? Do we have contacts at each of these outlets?
- Is our relationship with the media proactive, reactive, or both? In other words, do we wait for the media to come to us, or do we invite the media in, and sometimes offer up our own suggestions for stories?

Going Social

- What social media platforms are our board and division currently using, and for what purposes? Could we be using different social media, or be using them in different ways?
- What are other school divisions and boards doing with social media? Are there “good” and “bad” examples of social media use out there, that we should strive to emulate or avoid?
- Will our social media policies help us avoid potential pitfalls, or do they need to be strengthened? Are we all familiar with our social media policies?
- How are individual (i.e. trustee and administrator) and corporate (i.e. board or divisional) social media activity connected? Are they? Should they be?

Building Your Army of Advocates

- What formal and informal community groups exist within our school division, and what is the focus of each of these groups?
- Where does the focus or mandate of each of these community groups intersect with those of the school division? Where is the common ground when it comes to our interests or concerns?
- How do we currently connect with these groups, or do we? If not, how can we start doing so? Do any of us have personal connections that might be used as the foundation for organizational bridges?
- How can we bring these groups together to share perspectives, concerns and ideas in a meaningful way, with a focus on improving our schools for students and learning?



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Key Messages

- Do we spend time as the divisional leadership team (trustees and administrators) discussing what our key message or messages will be, whenever we make an important decision?
- Do we work proactively to disseminate our key messages, along with the actual decisions?
- As a board and as individual trustees, do we reinforce our key messages? Are there ways that we sometimes undermine them, either knowingly or unknowingly?

Elevator Speeches and Sound Bites

- Are there topics that are raised with or questions that are asked of us on a regular basis?
- Thinking about these questions or topics, what are the key messages that we think should be included in any conversation?
- Do these key messages include a strong focus on student success and well-being? Are there ways we can enhance this focus when we are interacting with community members on these topics?

Setting the Record Straight

- Have we ever had to “set the record straight”—that is, work to correct a factual error or misrepresentation? What did we do, and were we successful?
- What kinds of things are important to us, and what are we prepared to let slide, when it comes to setting the record straight?
- What means are within our own control when it comes to setting the record straight on an important matter—something other than asking a media outlet for a retraction or correction?

General discussion topic

- What are some of the specific messages we want to convey to our communities in the months leading up to the October 2018 school trustee elections?
- Should we be focusing solely on local issues, or is there merit in stressing the value of school boards in general, as grassroots, democratic institutions? What are the key messages we would want to convey about school boards?
- How should we be communicating with our communities at this critical time? Same as always? Same methods, just more often? Time to implement some new approaches?

