



## Community Voice

Getting your message out

# Introduction

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Most people who are engaged with public schools—students, parents, staff and trustees—will tell you that schools do a great job. By so many different measures, not just academics, students are succeeding, and they are graduating at unprecedented rates. But the less involved people are with their local school, the less likely they are to share this positive opinion. Often, **they just don't know** what is happening in schools, or **why** certain things are happening. Their only points of reference may be negative media coverage, unsubstantiated gossip, or even their own memories of what school was like in “the good old days.”

As school trustees, we need to share positive stories, to help **everyone** understand the strength of today's public schools, and how school boards make good schools better. This video series on **getting the message out** is a toolkit that will help school boards and trustees do just that.

We all know that **effective** communication is two-way communication. It requires listening as well as speaking, with the emphasis on listening. For school boards, “listening” often takes the form of community engagement. When school boards engage their communities, they create opportunities for **everyone** to voice their opinions, because everyone's opinion matters.

But as important as community engagement or “listening” is—and you'll find information about that on our website—it's not the focus of this series of Division Dispatches. Instead, we are looking at the “speaking” side of the equation. Our goal is to help school boards take greater control of their communications. By doing so, they can ensure the accuracy of information that is being shared. They can also communicate the success stories that are the real face of public schools, and re-frame public schooling conversations in a more positive light.

Broad-based support for public schools is possible, but that support needs to be nurtured through leadership and a strategic approach to communication. And that strategic approach can't be to communicate on an as-needed basis—that is, “we need our community to get behind us on this particular issue, so time to start communicating!” An effective communications strategy includes on-going, concerted and diverse components. This video series will support school boards in this regard by spurring ideas that will enable them to take control of and successfully convey the messages that communities need to hear.

