

# Communicating with your Community

Establishing Trust in Good Times  
Helps Weather the Bad Times



# Today's Presenters

Ray Pinney

New Jersey  
School Boards  
Association



Director, County Activities &  
Member Engagement

Paul Zeller

Pascack Valley  
Regional High  
School District



Director, Technology &  
Communication

President  
New Jersey School  
Public Relations Association

# ***Action Item:***

Why is Community Communication so Important?



Image: giphy.com

# Why is Community Communication so Important?

- Schools are not islands separate from the community
- When something goes wrong you have built up some trust
- It is a role of the board
- Have to realize that how people get and process information is completely different then it was not that long ago

# Why is Community Communication so Important?

- Your community will form opinions and get information about education and your schools even if you do not send anything out
- They may even gather get misinformation
- Someone will be shaping your communities opinions – shouldn't it be you!
- **Inaction is not an Option**

How do you know  
what the community is thinking?


# Look at Yourself Through the Community's Eyes

- Don't underestimate the importance of body language
- When public comes to a board meeting be aware you are being observed – maybe even filmed
- Don't look at your cell phone, look at the people who are speaking
- Explain the process – explain it again
- Leadership is always being observed

# The Four Functions of a Board of a Education

1. Provide guidance through policy. (**Policy**)
2. Provide for a program of quality instruction to advance student achievement. (**Planning**)
3. Provide for the effective management of the district by employing and evaluating the chief school administrator (CSA). (**Appraisal**)
4. Provide for two-way communication between the community and board. (**Communication**)





Strong relationships  
are based on **trust**  
and communication.

But if there is  
no **communication**,  
there can be no trust.

Simon Sinek



[www.zestfor.com](http://www.zestfor.com)

Image:  
[www.zestfor.com](http://www.zestfor.com)

# It is All About Relationships

- Relationships are built by individuals coming together
- For BOEs there are internal and external
- Internal is with CSA and between board members
- External is with parents, teachers, municipality, police and community
- Need to be constantly nurtured
- One bad relationship can negate many good ones

***And without trust, things can go from:***



***to***



***in an instant.***

# Communication

a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

# ***Action Item:***

List the ways your administration communicates with the community



# Establishing Goals and Communication Plans



Image: giphy.com

# Planning: R.A.C.E. Method

Research

Analyze and plan

Communicate

Evaluate



Image: giphy.com

# Research: Actively Listen & Gather Information



Image: giphy.com



# Analyze: Review the information and develop a plan



Image: giphy.com

Communicate:

Establish your  
message and  
communicate



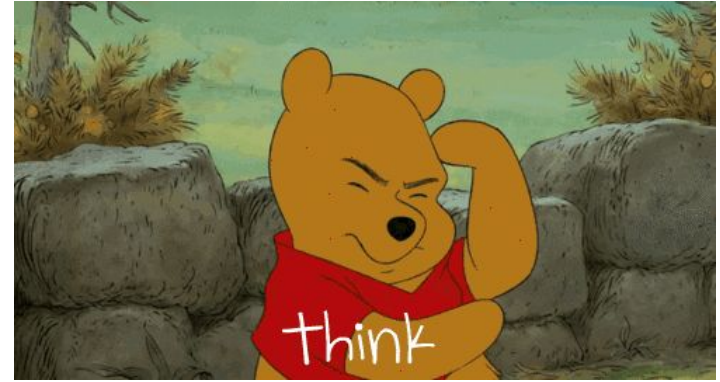


Image: giphy.com

Evaluate:  
Honestly  
evaluate  
the  
feedback.

## ***Action Item:***

Consider your  
Board's #1 Goal:



Brainstorm a plan to communicate that goal, or consider a way to improve how you are communicating that goal.

# A Few Suggestions

- Remember the four functions of the Board
  - Policy
  - Planning
  - Appraisal
  - Communication
- Stay in your lane
- Be as transparent as possible
- Be empathetic - especially when you don't agree



# A few lines to use to diffuse confrontation...

- “We understand people have very different opinions about this topic. We are committed to hearing all points of view, then to make the best decisions we can in interest of the students.”
- “We may not all agree on this topic, but we must show each other respect when sharing opinions.”
- “The Board’s primary goal is serving the best interests of our students. When making our decisions, we take all public comments into consideration, keeping in mind we must and will follow all State regulations.”

# When members of the public demand a response...

- “Public comment is a time Board members carefully listen to opinions and concerns so they can make the best decisions possible. However, ‘public comment’ is not ‘public discussion’ - we will not be engaging in discussion at this time.”
- “Please contact the Superintendent’s Office directly with your question. Proper information will be gathered and as appropriate, the Board President or Superintendent will respond to your question in a timely manner.”

And  
remember,

Trust is  
everything





A Quick Plug for...



[www.njspra.com](http://www.njspra.com)

# Contact Us

Ray Pinney

New Jersey  
School Boards  
Association



[RPinney@njsba.org](mailto:RPinney@njsba.org)



Paul Zeller

Pascack Valley  
Regional High  
School District



[pzeller@pascack.org](mailto:pzeller@pascack.org)



[president@njspra.com](mailto:president@njspra.com)