

# Leadership CONNECTIONS



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**Public schools cannot survive without a meaningful Public Relations Campaign.**

**Principals, explain what you are doing and why!**

Policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has fueled the public debate and discourse regarding school choice. It has been more than a decade since President George W. Bush proposed that students in persistently low performing be allowed to use Title I funds to transfer out. The school choice option allows students to transfer to another public school including a charter school. Policy and politics did not consider that the formula for funding public schools were based on enrollment and that the Federal Budget to states for schooling is relatively small compared to state funding.

Ten years since the implementation of NCLB and the reality for public school principals often feels bleak. Urban schools serving our most neediest of students are faced with limited budgets because of dwindling enrollment in light of students transferring to charter schools and a decrease in local tax dollars due to high unemployment and a national recession. Lower student enrollment means that public schools do not have any additional resources for art, music, professional development, and meaningful enrichment opportunities for students.

***What are principals to do?*** First, principals must realize that the paradigm has shifted. Principals can no longer operate and survive without a meaningful Public Relation Campaign and strategies to better communicate their efforts in meeting the complex needs of urban students.

Principals should develop a Public Relation Campaign and plan that provides attention to the following:

- Utilize newsletters, back-pack letters, emails, local news coverage, and school posters to improve communication with parents and community.
- Explain what you are doing within your school that is unique. Let parents know the wonderful work you

are doing and the instructional focus by grade level and within all subject areas.

- Speak openly and honestly about how to create a Network of Care to support your students. Who are your students? Help parents and community learn more about your students, challenges they are facing, and connect the community to support services. For example, if you have a high population of students within your school who suffer from Asthma then write a brief newsletter to parents on: What is Asthma and 3 tips for Parents. Use every opportunity to be an advocate for your school, students, staff, and members of your school community.
- Help parents know how to prepare for homework assignments and what they can do to help their child feel more organized and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that parents know that their child's learning is in the hands of caring professionals. Provide a spotlight on a teacher or a best practice.
- Explain why you doing it! Parents and community need to understand what shifts you as a school are making to meet Common Core and why these shifts are necessary for ALL learners.
- Describe your school day. Take the time to give fun details about the school day and what the day feels like for learners, teachers, and the members of the school community.
- Explain to parents the best way to communicate with teachers. Provide parents with clear protocols and expectations on how to make contact, support

learning, and get answers to questions.

- Provide attention to student work. Parents need to know what good student work looks like and feels like so that they help assess the progress their child is making during the school year.
- Invite your local congress person and advocates to visit your school and to learn more about the needs of the students, families and the community you serve. Highlight what is working but you also need to open and honest about your needs and challenges faced. Ensure that they leave with a sample newsletter or product that highlights your school and student work.
- Celebrate! Take the time to celebrate students, teachers, and members of the school community. Parents need to know that education is more than what is happening in the classroom. They need to know that your school is a community and a place that values the whole child.

A principal's day is focused on supporting teachers and staff as the school works to implement State standards, CCLS, curriculum, instruction, assessments, and ensuring a safe and productive learning environment for ALL students. Keeping the community involved is challenging given the shortage of resources and the complexity of the school day. Principals need to know that keeping your eyes on the prize also means ensuring that parents and the community are aware of the work of the school and must help parents know and understand their child's academic journey. Principals need to take the time to develop and ensure a comprehensive and strategic Public Relation Campaign.

*Dr. Selma K. Bartholomew, president of Legacy Pathways, has more than 16 years of solid experience as an educator and leader. She works with schools locally and nationally to help them improve the quality of teaching, learning, and leadership. Helping schools leaders with the strategic planning needed to effectively manage and rollout the many initiatives. As a company, our team of Program Leaders bring their wealth of expertise to help schools bridge the gap between theory and practice to ensure that ALL students are prepared with the cognitive backpack and skills to meet College and Career Readiness goals.*