



Reform Support Network

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT:

***PROMISING PRACTICES TO SUPPORT RACE TO THE TOP
REFORM PRIORITIES AND PLANS***

August 22, 2012

Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Community of Practice

AGENDA

- I. Introduction (3:00–3:10)
- II. State Communications and Engagement Review Findings (3:10–3:25)
- III. Promising Communications and Engagement Practices: Strategies, Messages and Tools (3:25–4:10)
- IV. Discussion (4:10–4:25)
- V. Next Steps (4:25–4:30)

GOALS FOR TODAY

- Introduce the Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Community of Practice
- Examine findings from recent review of Race to the Top communications and engagement efforts by State education agencies (SEAs) and advocacy organizations
- Highlight examples of promising practices in Race to the Top communications and engagement collected as part of review
- Discuss State communications and engagement resources and challenges

PURPOSE OF OUR CoP

We aim to help all States successfully support implementation of Race to the Top reforms through strategic communications and engagement with multiple stakeholders. This community of practice exists to:

- Reserve a space for States to focus on communications and engagement in all core areas
- Create a forum for collaboration and critical review
- Share best practices, provide resources and develop support around areas of high need

CORE AREAS OF COMMUNICATIONS

We map communications into five core areas:

- 1** Public Relations Campaigns
- 2** Media Relations
- 3** Engagement
- 4** Transparency
- 5** Relationship Management

SPRING 2012

RACE TO THE TOP STATE COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

- Interviewed State Race to the Top leads
- Interviewed key advocacy organizations in some Race to the Top States
- Probed in three key areas:

Message

- What information do you want to communicate about Race to the Top reforms?
- Why?

Audience

- Who are you trying to reach?
- How do the messages differ for each group?

Strategy

- What are your communication methods?
- What are your biggest successes?
- Biggest challenges?

LEADER INTERVIEWS

Race to the Top States

Delaware

Florida

Georgia

Hawaii

Massachusetts

Maryland

New York

North Carolina

Ohio

Rhode Island

Tennessee

National Advocacy Groups

Achieve

Battelle for Kids

Hope Street Group

Hunt Institute

Mass Insight School Turnaround Group

National PTA (reviewed materials only)

Stand for Children

State Advocacy Groups

Advance Illinois

KidsOhio.org

Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education

Prichard Committee (Kentucky)

Rodel Foundation of Delaware

Tennessee SCORE

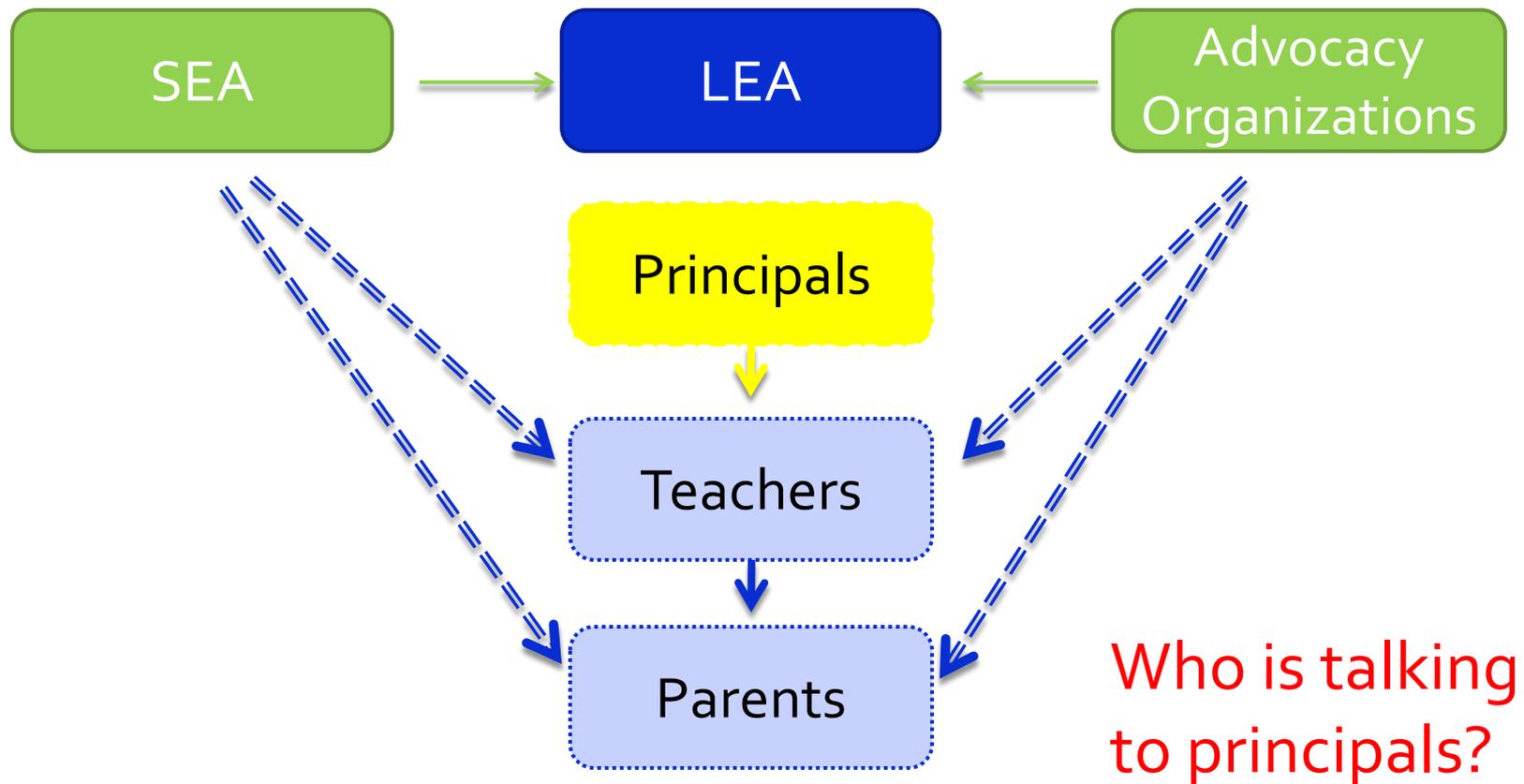
WHAT WE HEARD: MESSAGES

- States have focused on communicating about individual Race to the Top efforts; they are struggling now to connect the dots between reform areas.
- States see the need to showcase the early successes and impact of Race to the Top by illustrating tangible changes in the classroom.
- States see the need to “rebrand” Race to the Top as a broader reform effort that will last long after the grant.

WHAT WE HEARD: AUDIENCE

- SEAs are focused on communicating with **teachers**; advocacy groups are focused on communicating with **State opinion leaders**.
- Both groups struggle to communicate with **parents** to help them understand what reforms will mean for their community, their schools and their children.
- **Principals** are a critical link to teachers, but few organizations are reaching out to them.
- All groups continue to struggle to “change the hearts and minds” of educators, parents and the general public.

ONE AUDIENCE IS BEING MISSED



Who is talking to principals?

WHAT WE HEARD: STRATEGIES

- States and advocacy groups are primarily using **traditional communications and outreach methods** (email, newsletters, face-to-face interactions).
 - Peer-to-peer communication is most effective channel for educators, but also hardest to do well and at scale
- Some States are using partnerships to launch more innovative and wide-reaching strategies.
 - **Tennessee** (in partnership with SCORE)
 - **Delaware** (in partnership with the Rodel Foundation)
- More advocates and credible spokespeople are needed.

OUR HYPOTHESIS

- States are implementing dramatic change in public education – traditional, one-way communications are not enough.
- SEAs can no longer rely on communicating only with superintendents; messages aren't reaching principals.
- States need to adopt more pro-active, wider-reaching strategies to enhance their communications.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in your States in communicating about your efforts and engaging stakeholders?
- Which audience(s) do you think you have engaged most effectively?
- Which audience(s) do you still struggle to reach?
- How are you engaging principals?

KEY COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

- New U.S. Department of Education web page features examples of high-quality communications and engagement tools and strategies used by States and advocacy organizations
- Six categories:
 - I. Communications plans and outreach efforts
 - II. Messaging and opinion research
 - III. Newsletters and updates
 - IV. Outreach and issue briefs
 - V. Social media
 - VI. Websites
- Learn more here:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sce-cop.html>

I. COMMUNICATIONS PLANS AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

These efforts align messages and engage stakeholders by explaining “the why” of reforms.

Elements to consider

- Audience – Who will you reach?
- Timeline – How will your plan develop over time?
- Resources – What tools can you use?
- Evaluation – How will you measure your success?

Outlets to consider – opportunities to engage stakeholders

- Websites
- Newsletters
- Op-eds
- Focus Groups
- Webinars
- Social Media
- Face-to-face Interactions
- Email

FEATURED ITEMS

- Battelle for Kids – [Guidance on Advocacy Campaigns](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – [Education Evaluation Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#)
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – [READY Campaign Website](#)
- For more information, visit:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sce-cop.html>

FOR EXAMPLE:

NORTH CAROLINA'S READY CAMPAIGN

- Statewide campaign to build understanding and engage constituencies in State reform efforts
- Establishes a brand and set of messaging materials to guide communications
- Uses face-to-face meetings, newsletters, webinars and a "road show"
- Maintains constant contact with internal staff to keep messaging consistent
- Works with a local communications firm to target messages and conduct research



II. MESSAGING ADVICE AND OPINION RESEARCH

- Numerous organizations now provide message guidance and research regarding Race to the Top priorities.
- Offer evidence to address questions such as:
 - What do groups of stakeholders think about reforms?
 - What types of messages resonate with different stakeholders?
 - What steps can States take to develop effective messaging?
 - How can States address concerns and myths surrounding Race to the Top?
- Can serve as a valuable starting point for creating evidence-based communications strategies

FEATURED ITEMS

- Achieve – [Messaging Tools and Opinion Research on College- and Career-Readiness](#)
- James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy – [College- and Career-Ready State Standards Materials](#)
- For more information, visit:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sc e-cop.html>

FOR EXAMPLE:

THE HUNT INSTITUTE STANDARDS MATERIALS

- Well-organized and concise guide for policymakers on promoting the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
- Addresses and dispels myths about CCSS
- Includes key talking points, FAQ, useful quotes and links to additional resources to support communications efforts



Myth: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will be implemented through NCLB – signifying the federal government will be leading them.

Fact: The CCSS were developed through a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind. Although states collectively created the CCSS, each state made its own individual decision on adoption of the CCSS.

III. NEWSLETTERS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Strong newsletter elements include:

- Regular production schedule
- Targeted content
- Consistent format
- Tips and tools for readers
- Easy-to-read layout (not overwhelming)
- Effective distribution method
- Invitations for feedback from readers

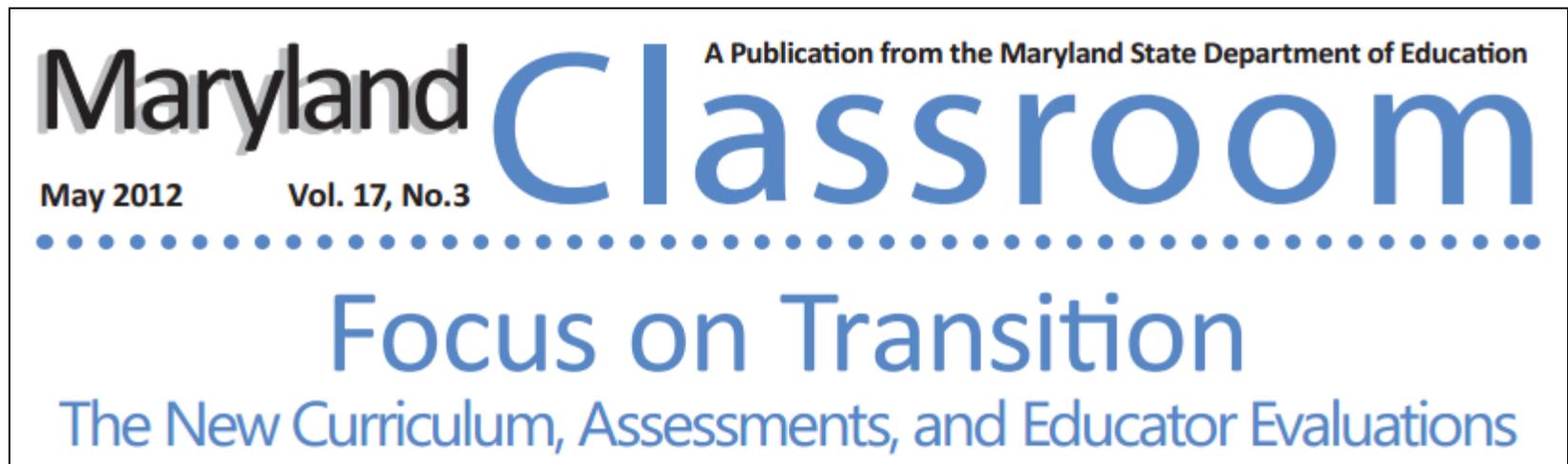
FEATURED ITEMS

- Delaware Department of Education – [The Delaware Educator](#)
- Maryland State Department of Education – [Maryland Classroom Newsletter](#)
- Maryland State Department of Education – [RTTT Monthly Update Newsletter](#)
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – [Weekly Update Newsletter](#)
- For more information, visit:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sc-e-cop.html>

FOR EXAMPLE:

MARYLAND CLASSROOM

- Released to LEAs online and in printed format
- Provides immediate and relevant content to educators, combined with links to multimedia
- Keeps educators informed of important changes
- Addresses concerns head-on



IV. OUTREACH AND ISSUE BRIEFS

- These efforts consist of three key components:
 1. Proactive outreach to key stakeholders to build understanding and support around State reform efforts
 2. Development of clear and concise materials that address specific needs and interests of stakeholders
 3. Consistent messages
- Successful efforts maintain communications with stakeholders to fine-tune materials to fit changing needs
- Some successful campaigns partner with private organizations and initiatives

FEATURED ITEMS

- Hawaii State Department of Education – [Guide for Parents of New Kindergarteners](#)
- Mass Insight Education – [Turnaround Take 2 Brief](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – [Brochure and Booklet on Race to the Top Initiatives](#)
- National Parent Teacher Association – [Materials on College- and Career-Ready State Standards](#)
- Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – [Educator Evaluation Briefs](#)
- Tennessee Department of Education – [Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model Rapid Response to Email System](#)
- Tennessee SCORE – [Educator Evaluation Feedback Process](#)
- For more information, visit:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sce-cop.html>

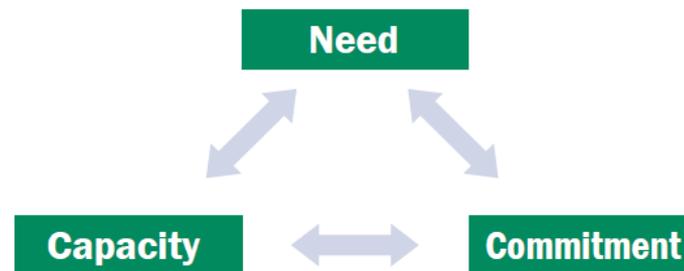
FOR EXAMPLE:

MASS INSIGHT SCHOOL TURNAROUND BRIEFS

- Initially published as a policymaker guide with clear steps on how to conduct school turnarounds
- Guide is regularly updated with blogs and issue briefs to reflect current state of school turnaround efforts based on field observations and interviews
- Briefs break apart information into small chunks that reflect different elements and perspectives

Funding decisions: A balancing act

To receive funds, schools must prove that they have the need for additional resources, the political will to adopt difficult changes, and the technical ability to actually implement the chosen intervention model. In order for states to achieve maximum impact of these grants, SIG funding decisions must balance these sometimes competing criteria.



Which schools are in the most **NEED** of services?

V. SOCIAL MEDIA



- A strong social media presence can promote reform efforts
- Can complement existing communications strategies by creating an online dialogue
- Quality social media tools are informative, accessible and interactive to maintain interest
- Consider your goals, audience and success measures
- The Reform Support Network will release a publication and webinar spotlighting social media in September 2012

FEATURED ITEMS

- Maryland State Department of Education – [Race to the Top Videos](#)
- Mass Insight Education – [Turnaround Zone Website](#)
- Rodel Foundation of Delaware – [Connect the Dots/Vision 2015 Video](#)
- Tennessee SCORE – [The SCORE Sheet Blog Website](#)
- For more information, visit:
[http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sc
e-cop.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sc
e-cop.html)

FOR EXAMPLE:

TENNESSEE SCORE SHEET

- Updated daily and invites contributions from teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders
- A clear and easy-to-use layout
- Allows users to comment on posts
- Links to videos, blogs and social media sites

Leadership



The forgotten middle—students with promise but no direction 2

JULY 9, 2012

by SCORE in Leadership



FutureStar Leadership Summit participants; March, 2012

This post is a contribution to the SCORE Sheet from Mary Hall and Stephanie Kolitsch.

Every school has them—those students who have the talent to succeed or even excel, but who, for one reason or another, do not realize their potential. Many times these students are overlooked by school programs, which often focus on the most talented and highest achieving, or the most at-risk students. This is even more critical in rural areas, where funding for programs is extremely limited.

We worked with the WestStar Program at the University of Tennessee at Martin to develop a program that targeted middle school students who have the potential to succeed. The one-day program, called the FutureStar Leadership Summit, was held March 16 at UT Martin. Nineteen students from Weakley County were chosen by their school counselors to attend. [\(MORE...\)](#)

VI. WEBSITES

Strong website elements include:

- Regular production schedule
- Targeted content
- Consistent format
- Tips and tools for readers
- Easy-to-read layout (not overwhelming)
- Effective distribution method
- Invites feedback from readers

FEATURED ITEMS

- Delaware Department of Education – [Delaware's Turnaround Website](#)
- Florida Department of Education – [Florida's Path to Success Website](#)
- New York State Department of Education – [New York's EngageNY Website](#)
- For more information, visit:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sc e-cop.html>

FOR EXAMPLE:

ENGAGENY

- Designed as a central source of information for New York State reforms, including guides, toolkits and instructional videos
- Content divided by audience and reform area, allowing users to navigate effortlessly



- Site is included on all New York State Education Department communications to boost traffic and maximize outreach

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS

- What types of tools have you found helpful in improving communications and engagement efforts in your State?
- Are there tools you want to learn more about?
- Which audience have you found the most difficult to reach? Could any of these tools help?
- In what other ways can this community of practice assist you in your communications and engagement efforts?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

HOW THIS CoP COULD BEST SERVE STATES

- In-person (optional) convening/training on communications and Race to the Top core education reforms?
- Series of communications-focused webinars?
- Multi-State workgroups?
- Ongoing series of publications on communications topics?

BE ON THE LOOKOUT for a survey following this webinar to specify your preferences.

COMING SOON

- The Promising Practices web site will continue to grow and evolve. Please submit other examples of high-quality and promising tools to info@reformsupportnetwork.com.
- Upcoming publications and webinars:
 - Fall 2012: Social media publication and webinar series
 - Fall 2012: Release of communications self-assessment tool
 - Winter 2013: Toolkit featuring templates, guidance and resources to support State communications efforts
- To request individual communications support for your State, talk to your program officer.



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THANK YOU