

Effective Community Engagement: Straight Talk About the Work

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

~ Antoine de St. Exupery

The universe is made of stories, not atoms.

~ Muriel Rukeyser

PRESENTER

DAVID RUFF

Great Schools Partnership

The Context for this Session

Some considerations to think about:

- Effective communication strategies can make or break the reforms you are implementing
- Our schools will only change as much as the public can understand
- Everyone is an expert

The Context for this Session

And a few stories to get started:

- A school where every student gets accepted to college
- A school shut down because of severe physical issues with the building
- 483 verses 2

Outcomes for this Session

Participants will:

- Explore key research findings regarding public perceptions regarding public education;
- Learn several effective communication strategies; and
- Explore the development of a message triangle to support their work

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- A few stories
- Findings from the Frameworks Institute
- Findings from the NESSC School Board Focus Group Report
- Think, Turn, and Talk
- Strategy One: The Message Triangle
- Strategy Two: The Presentation Grid

Findings from the Frameworks Institute

1. Little Picture Thinking: education systems are invisible, which makes reforms unimaginable.
2. The Tangible Triad: unframed conversations about education and education reform tend to default to three highly visible actors who are judged as primarily responsible for education results: parents, teachers, and students.

Findings from the Frameworks Institute

3. The kinds of reforms that are easiest to think about are the most conventional: money, “the basics,” and computers.

4. Crisis thinking, while common in educational communications and campaigns, leads to caution and conservatism, not innovation and transformation.

Findings from the Frameworks Institute

5. Since most people feel they do not have an agency, power, or authority when it comes to changing the education system, they adopt a defensive posture that favors a consumerist “me and my kid” approach to educational issues.

6. Individualized and consumerist approaches to education make it difficult, but not impossible, for people to see education as an engine that drives national prosperity and as an investment we all make in the country's future.

Findings from the Frameworks Institute

7. When the goal of education is explicitly described as the future preparation needed to maintain and support our country's quality of life, people understand that a new set of skills and experiences are necessary.

8. When people come to understand the education system in concrete, familiar terms and the need to coordinate its different parts for the good of the whole, they become more expansive in their thinking about how and where reform might take place.

Findings from the Frameworks Institute

9. When people can see reform as a practical act or as a set of methodical steps toward an ultimate goal, they gain agency and become more enthusiastic about education reforms.

10. Individual education reforms need to be contextualized by values and simplifying models to avoid people's tendency to default to strong, entrenched patterns of thinking that undermine productive conversations and reforms. education reform to the core values they already hold.

NESSC School Board Focus Groups Report

21st century skills—like critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, financial literacy, and technology—are essential for success in today’s world.	4.91
The goal of high school is to prepare every student for success in life.	4.83
High schools need to make sure that graduates leave with the skills they need to be competitive workers in the global knowledge economy.	4.6
It’s every high school’s responsibility to teach students the skills they need to succeed in college, work, and citizenship.	4.5
Today’s high schools need to teach relevant, real-world skills that students can apply in every area of adult life.	4.47
High schools should provide personalized learning opportunities and flexible pathways to graduation that allow students to manage and design their own education.	4.43
Our high schools need to be more student-centered and provide personalized learning opportunities that are based on each student’s interests and aspirations.	4.39
A high school diploma should be based on demonstrated proficiency—it should certify that all students have achieved high learning standards.	4.37
In the 21st century, students need some form of higher education or postsecondary training to get a good job.	4.28
We need strong high schools to make sure our students can compete for jobs against workers from India and China.	4.11
Our high schools haven’t changed much for decades—they need to be more innovative when it comes to how they teach today’s students.	4.09
Improving equity and reducing achievement gaps between poor students and wealthy students, and between minorities and white students, should be a primary goal of our education system.	3.93
Every student should graduate from high school prepared for college.	3.2

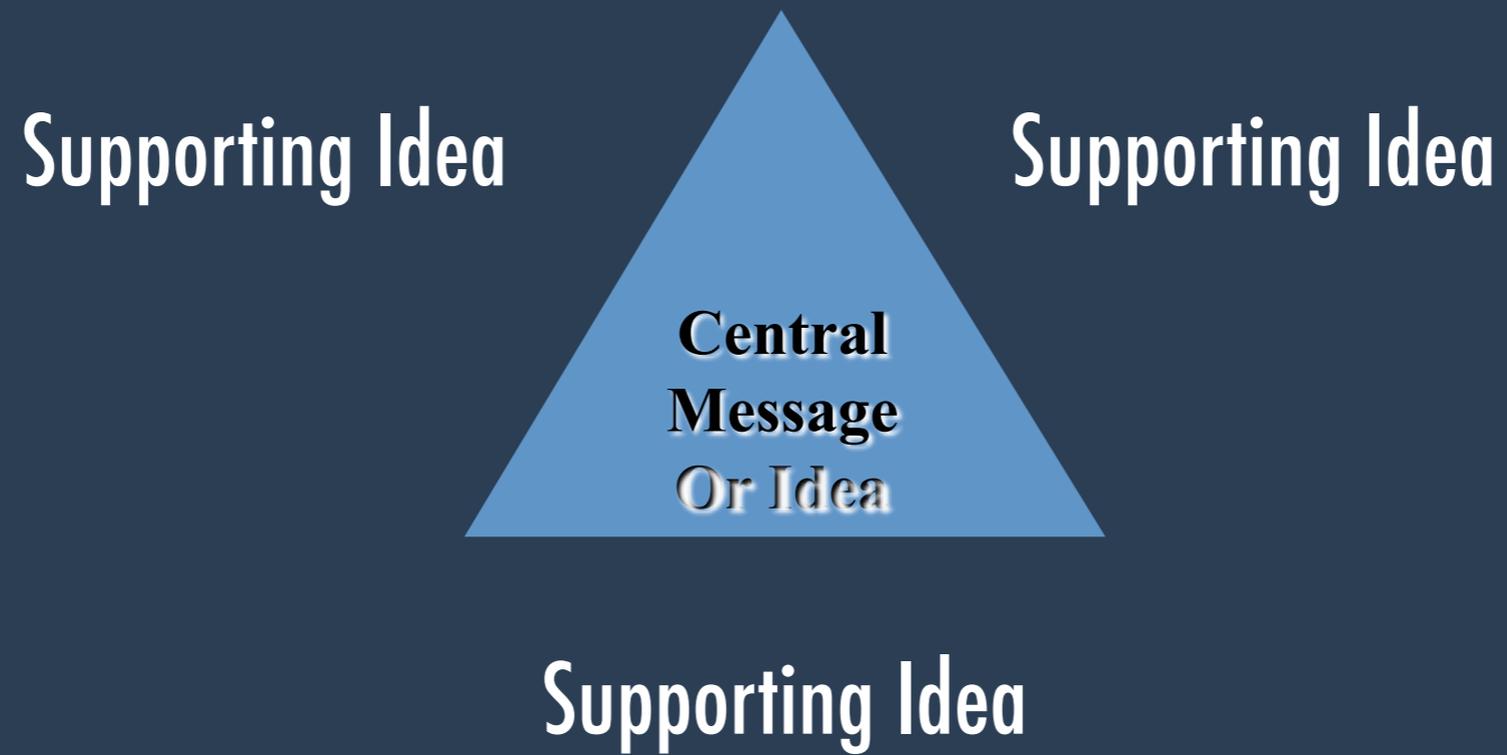
Think, Turn & Talk

What is a key concept about your work that you often share in public? Write this down.

Review the perceptions list. How might you need to change your language?

Share with a neighbor.

The Message Triangle



Presentation Grid

	Positive	Negative
TRUE	Affirm and amplify	Recast or explain
FALSE	"Let sleeping dogs lie"	Change the Impression

For more information:

Great Schools Partnership
482 Congress Street, Suite 500
Portland, Maine 04101
207-773-0505