Supporting States in Creating an Educator Evaluation Communications Strategy

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January 26, 2012
Why does it matter?

“Just about any endeavor that requires collective action, especially in a system as large and loosely coupled as the American education system, requires effective and nearly constant communication.”

– Coggshall (2007)
What is the primary reason states struggle so much with communication planning?

A. Capacity is too limited.
B. Expertise is too limited.
C. There is a lack of access to effective planning tools.
D. It is an overwhelming undertaking.
E. It is just not a primary priority.
What is the primary reason states struggle so much with execution of communication plans?

A. Capacity is limited.
B. Expertise is limited.
C. There is too much reliance on “old-school” communication strategies.
D. Understanding of the target audiences is limited.
E. It is just not a primary priority.
**Successful implementation…**

- Multiple and varied opportunities are provided for meaningful participation and feedback.
- All perspectives are accounted for during the design and review of tools and processes.
- A comprehensive communication plan uses multiple strategies to garner and sustain buy-in.
- Changes are made to the system based on constituent feedback.

**Mediocre implementation…**

- Communication is one-way, passive, or focused on single events.
- Only a select group is involved in the design of the system.
- The communication plan is not comprehensive and does not emphasize the proactive engagement of the community and media.
- The system is static; it is not reviewed or updated based on constituent feedback.
A high-quality communication plan is critical because it...

- Ensures a common vision among stakeholders.
- Provides a focus for engagement and communication efforts.
- Clarifies objectives, the most important messages, as well as target audiences.
- Creates avenues for feedback.
- Promotes accurate understanding of how the system works.
- Builds support for the new system, which is crucial for sustainability.

Do the states you are working with have a communication plan for their educator evaluation reform efforts?

A. Yes, and it is formalized (i.e., written down).
B. Yes, but it is not formalized (i.e., written down).
C. No, but they are working on it.
D. No, and they don’t know whether they should be creating one.
E. Possibly; it’s something to learn more about.
Key Questions You Can Use to Support the Plan Development

- **What are the communication objectives for each stakeholder group? What action or belief by the group will communication facilitate?**
- **What strategies and tactics will be most effective in reaching each group, and how will the tactics be carried out or implemented?**
- **What messages should be communicated to each stakeholder group?**
- **How will you gather feedback from each stakeholder group to inform the educator evaluation design?**

Using Your Practical Guide

Securing and Sustaining Stakeholder Investment and Cultivating a Strategic Communication Plan

Guiding Questions

1. Has the stakeholder group been identified for involvement in the design of the evaluation model?

Guiding Questions

- Who are the crucial stakeholders (e.g., teachers, union representatives, teacher preparation faculty, community members, administrators, state and local personnel and leaders)?
- What state departments will be affected by changes in teacher evaluation? Should a representative be included in the stakeholder group?
- Are other stakeholder groups already established? If yes, could one of these groups be expanded to include teacher evaluation work?
- Do representatives from other stakeholder groups need to be appointed to this stakeholder group to ensure that reform efforts are aligned?

Group Roles and Expectations

2. Have the group expectations and individual roles been established?

Guiding Questions

- Will the group have authority in making decisions, or will it serve in an advisory capacity?
- What is the group’s purpose? Will it help design the system, provide recommendations, and/or provide approval?
- What level of commitment will stakeholders be required to make (e.g., how frequently the team will meet, for how many months)?
- Does legislation dictate the work of the stakeholder group?

- What skills, experience, and knowledge does each stakeholder bring to the table?
- What roles need to be filled (e.g., monitoring, enacting support, interpreting legislation)?
- Will some stakeholders be involved in designing the system? Communicating plans and progress? Designing research?
Who are your stakeholders, what do they value, and how are you targeting them?

- Educators (including unions, associations, collaboratives, networks, and consortia)
- Local Policymakers
- Civic and Business Leaders, General Community Members, and the Legislature
- Media, Foundations, Think-Tank and Advocacy Organizations
Stakeholders and Example Objectives

Educators

• To inform and persuade this audience to trust and support your state’s evaluation framework and to assure them that the key purpose is to support and improve educator effectiveness.

The Legislature

• accurate and timely information about the design, implementation, and impact of the state’s evaluation plan so that critical policy decisions are effectively deliberated and determined.
Your Turn...

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<th>Stakeholder</th>
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Creating a Core Message

• Core messages are intended to convey overarching or big ideas and key points about a project, initiative, or issue.
• Big ideas can be expressed in less formal, less precise language.
• They are designed to evoke emotion and connect to values.
• Core messages also often address questions, concerns, or actions desired from target audiences.
Differentiating Core Messages
Strategies and Tactics

Collateral
- Presentations
- One-Pagers
- FAQs
- Memos
- Newsletters
- Op-Eds
- Website

Interpersonal
- Meetings
- Presentations
- Regional Forums
- Briefings
- Webinars

Media
- Op-Eds
- Radio
- TV

Digital
- Website
- Blogs
- Webinars

Social Media
- Facebook
- Twitter
Strategies, Tactics, Audiences

Using Your Practical Guide

**COMMUNICATION PLAN**

3. Does the group have a strategic communication plan to keep the broader school community informed?

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**
- What information needs to be communicated to stakeholders?
- Will pilot results be communicated?
- Will progress on the design, implementation, and success of the evaluation system be shared?
- Will teacher evaluation results be reported?

**Target Audience**

- Which stakeholders should be kept informed about the development, implementation, and results of efforts related to teacher evaluation?
- Who will be the target audience (e.g., pilot participants, teachers, administrators, students, parents, community)?
- Will communication efforts be varied according to audience (e.g., board members require more detailed updates than community members)?
- How will personnel outside of the stakeholder group be kept informed?

**Mode**

- Do channels of communication with stakeholders already exist?
- Does the state have a public communications department that could assist in marketing?
- What forms of communication will be utilized (e.g., website, e-mails, newsletters, public announcements)?

**Timing**

- Does the plan include communication strategies throughout the development process (e.g., in the beginning, during, and after each phase)?
- Has the plan considered optimal timing for communicating evaluation efforts and results?
Educator Forums and Events

- Consider logistics and partnerships carefully.
- Define the purpose of the convening.
- Provide collateral materials.
- Include a mix of connecting, learning, and discussing on the agenda.
- Use skilled moderators, especially for small groups, and prepare them with a protocol.
- Gather data and be transparent about its use.
Engaging Educators Through Forums

*Everyone at the Table* provides materials to genuinely engage teachers and stimulate candid and respectful dialogue that gets to the heart of their perspectives on teacher evaluation.

[www.everyoneatthetable.org](http://www.everyoneatthetable.org)
## Everyone at the Table: Tools and Resources

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Using Your Practical Guide
(Borrowed) Lessons Learned

- Choose language carefully.
- Choose a name and identity.
- Anticipate the critics and skeptics.
- Communicate with the media regularly around key “events.”
- Plan for feedback loops and midcourse corrections.

Additional Lessons Learned

- It’s never too early …and it’s never too late.
- Dedicated resources are required.
- Provide as many two-way communication opportunities as possible.
- Involve educators in authentic, thoughtful, and primary ways.
Next Steps: I preliminarily plan to…

A. Share these materials with my state team(s).
B. Work with my state team(s) to identify target audiences, their values, and objectives.
C. Determine the best core messages.
D. Support the efforts to include more educator voices in the evaluation reforms.
E. All of the above
References


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