



Leading in Disruptive Times

THE MAIN IDEA's One-Pagers to Help School Leaders Ride The C's of Change

Clarity and Communication

You have a choice. As a school leader, you can resist the current wave of unprecedented change or you can make the most of it by riding that wave with the C's of change.

The 1st one-pager was about [calm and comfort](#) (click). This one is on the next C's: **clarity and communication**.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

As leaders, we are used to communicating to share information or make a point. During this stressful time, think less about what you want to say and more about how you want to make people feel – Calm? Cared for? Comforted? Informed? Reassured? Hopeful?

What are some ways you, as a school leader, can improve *clarity and communication*?

HOW and WHY are more important than WHAT you communicate.

WHY: 5 Reasons Your School Needs You to Communicate

- To provide clarity.** There is a lot of confusion now.
- To provide guidance.** During a crisis, people look to the leaders.
- To provide comfort.** See the quote about listening to the right.
- To provide an ear.** People need you to know their most pressing concerns.
- To provide hope.** "The leader's role is to define reality, then give hope." —Napoleon

HOW: 5 Ways Your School Needs You to Communicate

- Be regular.** Predictability is key right now. Develop communication *routines*. One elementary leader reads his school a story to start each day. Send updates the same day and time if possible.
- Be honest.** Even if it means grim facts, people are looking to you for the truth. Truth builds trust.
- Be brief.** Beware of information overload.
- Use stories.** Cuomo shares stories every day. His brother got COVID-19 and he tells stories about him to bring hope. Find stories of hope or success (about a student, staff member, famous person, etc.) and share these regularly.
- Connect.** Try new tools. Use Loom to email a video of yourself. Set up staff on Slack to feel more connected. Use a photo of your school as a virtual background on Zoom.

Tips to bring CLARITY

Cuomo's popularity stems in part from his clarity. Follow Matilda's law of social distancing. *Period.* Clarity is needed!

Start with clarity about your own priorities. Use this clarity to guide all decision making and communications. Sample priorities:
1. Health before homework. 3. Learning before letter grades.
2. Family before frustration. 4. Outcomes before optics.

Create and share a "Who To Go To For What" list.

Roles and tasks have changed. Need tech help? Need counseling for a student? Look to the list.

Host live Q&A sessions. There is nothing like getting clear info straight from the principal's mouth. I loved the [PPT](#) (click) and live session my daughter's principal did.

Tips to improve LISTENING

Feeling powerless? Consider the power of listening, "Listening is often the only thing needed to help someone."

Create opportunities to listen. Host "office hours" or a "Q&A" (above). Send a survey: *How's distance learning going?*

Schedule 2-minute power one-on-ones with all staff. Don't wait for them to come to you.

Replace *How are you?* with *How can I help?* You'll get much more robust and honest answers.

Try a green, yellow, red approach. The homebound elderly put green, yellow, or red paper in their windows to signal if they are OK, need an errand, or have an emergency. Adapt this so staff can communicate their color to you each day.

Even on Zoom or Google Hangouts, remember listening skills.

- Pause (breathe & put to-dos away)
- Validate (*I hear your concern...*)
- Ask (*How can I help?*)