


Building Support for Change

Working Together for School Wellness Summit

*Presented by Mabel Schumacher
WSPRA Board of Directors*



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Building Support for Change




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OR

Engaging the Stakeholders



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Why are we taking action?

- **The obesity epidemic**
 - 15.5% of children = overweight or obese
- **Super-sized proportions**
- **Inactivity**
 - Fewer than 20% of children and adults get regular workouts
- **Inconsistent health messages**
 - Health Curriculum v.s. vending machines / lunch choices
- **Serious implications of current health trends**
- **And the list goes on...**

Source: What's Right for Kids, 2003



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Public Engagement... Why?

- **Fraying public relationship**
- **Collaboration creates support and ownership**
- **Requirement of Child Nutrition Act legislation**

Child Nutrition and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Reauthorization Act of 2004



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Public Relations... What?

- **PR...Public Relations**
- **PR...People Relations**
- **People = Engagement**



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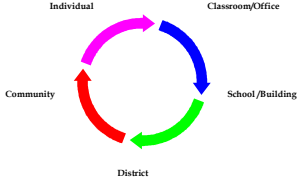

Public Engagement... What?

**“Public Relations
is not a thing or an event...
it is a way of thinking.”**



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Engagement at All Levels

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Public Engagement Builds on the Basic Premise...


**People Programs
Beat Paper Programs
Every Time!**



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The give & take of engagement

- Public ~ willing to engage
- District ~ willing to respond




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Public Engagement... Who?

Two publics

- The internal public
- The external public



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The Internal Public... Who?

In any public engagement process, don't forget about the internal public....

- Teachers
- Food Service personnel
- Teacher aides
- Secretaries
- Custodians
- Bus drivers
- Administrators
- Others



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Employee Stakeholders During Wellness Policy Development

- Administrative representative (one who derives income from vending machines)
- Health teachers
- Family and Consumer Education teachers
- Physical Education teachers
- Elementary and middle school representatives (all grades)
- FFA representative
- Food service representatives
- School nurse
- School Board

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The Internal Public... Why

- They should not be the “last to know” about changes to take place
- They are trusted in the community—people talk to them
- They can be “image builders” or “image breakers”

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The External Public... Who?

In any public engagement process, know the segments and skills of your external publics

- Parents
- Preschool parents
- Students
- Community members with no children
- Senior citizens
- Health community
- Business owners
- Community leaders and opinion leaders
- Political leaders

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External Stakeholders During Wellness Policy Development

- Parents from all levels (elementary/middle/high)
- Local hospital / health personnel
- City or County health services
- Recreation Department
- Physical activity specialists (YMCA)
- Physical trainers ~ physical therapists
- Local technical college (health program)
- County extension

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Student Representatives in the Wellness Policy

- Student Senate
- Student advisory group
- Student school board representatives

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The External Public... Why

- Specific expertise in the community
- Many points of view
- Credibility for the process
- Credibility for the policy
- Supporters of the process
- Supporters of the policy

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To Get the Best Information

Bring people at all levels of enthusiasm to the table

- Zealots
- Conservatives
- Moderates

Hear from all of them....
Let them bring up their "issues"



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How communities form opinions

- 3% Printed materials
- 7% Talking to others
- 90% Talking to employees, students—being part of a relationship

Source: Pat Jackson



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What Public?

"One of the principle reasons that campaigns to 'engage the public' don't go far enough is that there is often no public waiting to be engaged. Publics have to be created and recreated out of a multitude of self-interests, which don't always include an interest in schools."

-David Matthews
Kappan, (June 1997)


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What is Public Engagement?

- **Give and take**, open discussions with the community
- **Listening** to what the community wants its public schools to look like
- A chance for **community residents to influence school policy**
- A chance for the district to **be responsive** to what the community cares about


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Public Engagement is Not . . .

- A one-way conversation
- An opportunity for someone to get on their "soap box"
- A way to make decisions and then get the community on board


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Public Engagement Principles


- Create an ongoing process
- Go beyond the normal volunteers
- Begin by listening
- Avoid jargon—like the plague!
- Don't ignore the obstacles; deal with them


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There's risk involved

- Trust ~ mutual vulnerability
- Don't ask the question if you are not willing to live with the answers
- The community's plan may not be what you originally intended
- It may remain a work in progress
- It requires moving out of our comfort zones


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Developing the Policy...How?

To achieve a board policy that represents the community, the school board must **engage** the community in **meaningful discussions** about the **issues**.


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Developing the Policy...How?

- Recognize the problem / requirement
- Form a broad based committee
- Assess the local situation
- Develop action plans
- Communicate and implement action plans
- Evaluate results


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Focus, October 2003

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Developing the Policy...How?

- In the committee, facilitate; don't dominate
- Divide (the tasks) and conquer
- Face the tough issues
- Keep the school board up to speed
- Keep everyone informed with progress reports
- Use data gathering to inform and to provide a common knowledge base
- Create the "buzz" by using local media
- Use marketing techniques to introduce new concepts



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Public Engagement... When?

Two timeframes

- During policy development
- During policy implementation


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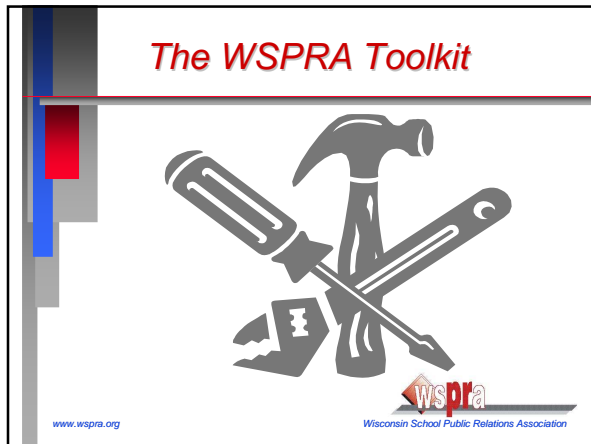
When attempting to change the health of a population...

Education
 (mere *paper and talk*)
 doesn't work!

Mary Ann Lippert, Marshfield Clinic


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Key Stakeholder Identification

- **Internal**
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- **External**
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

PS – Don't forget the students!

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Key Stakeholder Questions

- **Internal**
 - Who are the major groups in the organization?
 - Who are the opinion leaders?
 - What role can they play in the development of the wellness policy?
 - What role will they play in the implementation of the wellness policy?
 - How can they contribute to both processes?
 - How can you gather information from them?
 - What kind of information do they need in return?
 - How can the information be presented?

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Key Stakeholder Questions

- **External**
 - Who are the major groups in the community?
 - What expertise does each group have?
 - How can they be included to play a role in the development of the wellness policy?
 - What role could they play in the implementation of the wellness policy?
 - What methods can be used to gather information from them?
 - What kind of information do they need?
 - How can the information be presented to them?

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WSPRA Sample Communication Planning Chart

Audience	Key Messages	Type of Contact	Timeline	Person Responsible
Group 1	What messages does this group need to hear?	Personal Mail Phone Meetings Brochures Web site Fliers	When will they be contacted How often	Who is in charge of the communication process?

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Wisconsin School News Article

Wisconsin School News, October 2005

**Inviting Your Community to the Table...
The "Skinny" on Writing Your
School Wellness Policy**

by Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D. & Dorreen Dembski

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Gathering Data

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Engage Your Community
The Wellness Policy and Healthy Youth
[Sample Survey Questions
for Data Gathering](#)

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