Public Education Messaging Recommendations

Whatever you do and whatever you say, think first how it will give parents and community members confidence that public education is providing the individual attention each child needs to be successful, thereby creating a successful society.

Talk about value first and function second. The value public education provides each child should always be the first message.

- Talk about the needs of parents and children first—not the needs of the system—then talk about the supports necessary to help each child and family achieve its goals.

- In terms of budget issues, lead with the educational needs of children and parents who want the best for their children—then tie those needs to the pressures being placed on teachers in terms of budget cuts, salaries, lack of professional development and threats to career stability. If you lead with the latter, it makes it seem that teachers are fighting for things that help teachers, not for what children need. Put the children first and tie teacher needs to what happens in the classroom and the outcomes for children.

- Common Core must be sold as excellence for all and should be tied to the need for greater investment in supporting and building teachers’ capacity. Common Core should be explained as new and improved curriculum that produces a well-rounded and prepared child, while keeping in mind this takes time. Lead with the reasoning behind implementing Common Core standards—we want to better prepare each child for life—and explain how Common Core’s higher standards are the means to this end.

  o We chose to implement the Common Core standards because we believe it’s not enough to prepare children for a test or the next grade year—we need to prepare each child for life. Because parents, local volunteers, classroom teachers and educators all work together to prepare each child for success, the guidance of these more meaningful and comprehensive educational standards will better prepare each child for life as a capable, well-rounded individual. We’ll see test scores improve every year as we all work together for our children’s growth and success.

Avoid the temptation to go negative—stay positive.

- Stay positive, talk about successes and illustrate them in human terms; but also acknowledge needs.
and concerns, framing them as opportunities to provide greater success to each student at every level of ability.

- Don’t focus on the message that North Carolina’s current funding makes it one of the lowest in the nation. It’s not about the amount of funding; it’s about the outcomes from funding. There are some who believe that cutting budgets will create better outcomes or the same outcomes.

- Focus more on the success stories in the classrooms and the invitation to thank teachers rather than the tough working conditions/budget.

- In terms of the Common Core scores rollout, keep the message something like this:

  o We could have had higher test scores on the tests we used to use, but we saw the opportunity to do more by focusing on broader and deeper development of skills in each child. The new tests give us a better understanding of how parents, teachers and educators can work together so that each child is better prepared for success in life.

Focus on the valued outcome—preparing each child for life—and the resources and relationships that create the clearest path to achieving that outcome.

- We all know how valuable each child is and how much parents and teachers want each one of them to develop their full potential.

- We thank our teachers for their ability to meet each child where they are and bring out the best in our community’s schools and classrooms.

- When we all come together, we give our children the best resources for success in the classroom and in life. We know there are many pressures on our schools, and we thank you for supporting our teachers and want to join together in thanking them.