
Series Foreword

Never before has it been as important for school leaders to communicate effectively with their stakeholders, including students, teachers, families, community leaders, and the public. This is not a matter of selling the message or gaining political support or heading off opposition. Indeed, if these goals shape the communication strategy of a school, it is almost certainly going to be ineffective—if not counterproductive.

Drawing on research on private, as well as public, organizations, and drawing on decades of experience, E. Joseph Schneider and Lara L. Hollenczer provide school leaders with ways of thinking and acting strategically to build partnerships that will enhance the contributions schools can make to student learning.

The strategic approach to “communication management” that Schneider and Hollenczer describe recognizes that schools cannot do their job without both the support of families and others that influence student learning and the ideas and information they can provide. The “management” of communications is essential because there is a great deal of information to which the schools’ stakeholders have access, and they have limited time and interest in sorting out what they really need to know and what they have learned that is not true or otherwise misleading.

Managing communication does not mean manipulating information, however. It means carefully planning to inform and to learn from stakeholders in the school’s effectiveness to ensure that all children learn at high levels. Chester Barnard, said by some to be one of the pioneers of thinking about organizations, argued in 1938 that businesses

need to think about those on whom the success of the company depends (e.g., clients) as members of the organization. In successful organizations, members need to be well informed, have the capacity to understand one another, trust that what they are learning is truthful, and know that their ideas are sought and respected. That understanding guides the strategic approach to communication advocated in this unique book.

—*Willis D. Hawley*