



Equip your messengers

SUPPORT COMMUNICATORS AT EVERY LEVEL

You Don't Have to Go It Alone in Communicating about Data

As a state or district leader, it's essential that you set the tone for policy messages and talk to people about education data use in your communities. However, you are not the only person who can—or should—communicate about the value of data and how it is used and protected. Often the people talking about data are teachers, parents, and school or other community leaders. These communicators play a vital role by meeting people where they are and addressing how data use affects them and their students.

Identify the best people to talk to about data, and make sure they are equipped with clear, consistent messaging for a productive conversation.

When considering which messengers to engage, think about the audience you are trying to reach and who may already be talking to them about data use and other education issues. Think about who that audience trusts and who has the most relevant knowledge and experience to address their questions and speak to how data use directly affects them. Make sure your messenger is equipped to speak without falling back on confusing jargon and eduspeak.

Messengers to consider include the following:

Teachers can tell stories about how they have used data to help students.

TIP If your state has a teacher council or a teacher fellowship program (such as Hope Street Group, Teach Plus, or others), work with those teachers to elevate their voices and experience.

Parents can talk about how they have used information to make the best decisions about their child's education.

TIP Local parent teacher associations (PTAs) and parent teacher organizations (PTOs) are great resources, as well as organizations like Urban League and UnidosUS.

School and district leaders can communicate how data is informing goals for all students.

TIP You can tap leaders from suburban, rural, and urban districts to show the power of data in multiple settings.

Business leaders can talk about the power of evidence to improve outcomes in education.

TIP Business leaders are especially powerful messengers for policymakers. From performance management to return on investment, business leaders understand the value of data.

Community leaders and activists can talk about the need for evidence to make change and support schools.

TIP Community leaders and advocates have their ear to the ground in local districts and may even be able to help you identify additional messengers.

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ACTIVATING YOUR MESSENGER

Many people in your state or district can talk about the power of data. Support them through existing communication channels, and consider developing new ones that better meet people where they are. Whether providing direct training or just engaging different audiences with your messages, consider the following strategies:

- 📶 advertisements on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms targeted to specific audiences, especially parents and teachers
- 📶 newsletters for district and school leaders—some pieces can also be posted on social media for a broader reach
- 📶 local media—both formal and informal, like blogs or listserves—to push out important ideas or initiatives
- 📶 virtual town halls on Twitter or Facebook Live to engage directly with people in real time
- 📶 state data conferences that allow you to bring educators and leaders together to dig into data, solve problems, and provide feedback
- 📶 collaboration with critical friends, like state and community advocates, to highlight bright spots and get feedback on what's not working

For information on how you can center your communications on stories of real students and schools, see "Tell Stories about Students" in this toolkit.